

THE RECORDS OF THE BRITISH FACTORY AT LISBON

In the autumn of 1807, as it became evident that a French invasion of Portugal was imminent, the Council of the Factory took steps to preserve its journals and other records by sending them to England. The journals for the years 1749 to 1807 were entrusted to the departing British Consul, James Gambier. They were never seen again. They were rumoured to have been lost at sea, on what evidence we do not know. Gambier arrived safely.

The earlier journals, covering the years 1708 to 1749 were not, for some unexplained reason, entrusted to Gambier; but they too, have been lost without trace. At the first meeting of the Factory after the expulsion of the French in October, 1808, the acting British Consul, John Bell, produced these earlier books and laid them on the table before the assembled members. They were never mentioned again and no reason for their disappearance has ever been found. It is quite possible, if they still exist, that they are somewhere in Portugal.

So much for the civil records. The Church records were, at the same time, entrusted to the Chaplain of the Lisbon Factory, the Reverend Herbert Hill, M. A., for conveyance to England. They consisted of the Registers of Marriages, Baptisms and Burials for the years 1721 to 1807, and they were safely deposited by him at Doctors' Commons in the City of London on 27th

May, 1808. It is with these, and later Church records, that this account is concerned.

Doctors' Commons was a society of ecclesiastical lawyers in London which formed a distinct profession for the practice of civil and canon laws. It was the repository of wills and certain church records and, when it was abolished in 1857, on the reorganization of the legal profession, the documents in its archives were transferred to the Guildhall Library in the City of London. There, in 1972, the registers carried over from Lisbon by the Reverend Herbert Hill in 1807 were examined by the writer of these notes. («Foreign Register» section of the archives of the Diocese of London, Guildhall Library (M. S. 10, 466/1-5).

Towards the end of the Peninsular War in 1814, the Council of the Society of British Merchants and Factors of Lisbon, which had been formed to take the place of the British Factory, abolished by treaty in 1810, obtained from Doctors' Commons a certified copy of the registers deposited there in 1808 by the Reverend H. Hill. This certified copy has recently been entrusted to this Society for care and preservation.

It is a handsome volume comprising copies of the four original registers taken to England by the Reverend H. Hill. It bears traces of having been repaired or rebound locally fairly recently; it is in an excellent state of preservation and still bears the original seal of Doctors' Commons.

The other registers entrusted to this Society at the same time by the Council of St. George's Church, Lisbon, for repair and safe-keeping are:

Two Registers of Marriages:	1812-1863 + 1863-1967
One Register of Baptisms:	1812-1892
Two Registers of Burials:	1811-1892 + 1892-1944

A small book, duplicating the Burials for the years 1829 to 1855, was received at the same time as the other Registers. The entries give fuller details in some cases but the name of the officiating clergyman is omitted. No reason has been found for the existence of this book.

With the exception of the Burial Registers, the books are in a fair state of preservation. One volume, the Register of Baptisms, had been painstakingly restored by two ladies of the Community who had placed each page in a separate cellophane bag and rebound them in that condition. Only the two Burial Registers are in an advanced state of disintegration; none of the pages are attached to the binding and all are so damaged and fragile that they could scarcely be touched without causing further destruction. It was decided to photocopy what was left of each of the 262 pages of these registers and to bind the photocopies. With the generous help of a member of the Society, this has been done. The original books are being carefully preserved for exhibition but not for reference purposes.

None of these registers have printed ruling, as is the modern custom. Not until 1862 were the pages hand-ruled, greatly facilitating the task of the researcher. The pattern of the rulings was later improved, as was much else, by Canon Pope (1867-1902). He also made many annotations and corrections in the earlier registers in use before he took over the Chaplaincy; evidently he was able to refer to sources which have not survived or, at any rate, have not been found by us.

It is proposed to deal first with the Burial Registers, but before doing so one may wonder, for a moment, what happened to the bodies of those who died here unrecorded before there was a British Cemetery. Rose Macaulay probably gives the right answer: «Heretic corpses were not allowed the use of the local burial grounds, nor to have their own; our early merchants,

factors and apprentices were shovelled underground anywhere, usually on the shore of sea or river, and no stone marks their graves, which, for historians of the English in Portugal, is a pity.» (They Went to Portugal, p. 233).

The British Cemetery was opened in 1721 and, although pride of place may be of little importance in this matter, it should be noted that the first burial to be registered was that of Mary Paulsen on 20th of August of that year, not Francis La Roche, as is frequently stated; his was the 130th burial, on 6th February, 1724.

Between 1721 and 1942 the registers show a total of 4923 burials recorded by the Chaplains of the Factory or their substitutes, and later by the incumbents of St. George's Church. There were, in addition, the Dutch burials not registered in these British records. During this period there were two long gaps in the registers. From June 1754 to June 1763 there are no burial records although it is known that burials took place; Henry Fielding, for instance, was buried in November 1754; and the following year some, if not all of the 77 British subjects known to have lost their lives in the earthquake, would almost certainly have been buried in the Cemetery. For this same period the Registers of Marriages and of Baptisms were kept normally, which leads one to suppose that the pages of the Burial Register for these years were deliberately removed or otherwise lost. The second gap in the registers, covering the three types of record, occurs after the original books were sent to London in 1807. New registers were not opened until 1811. Shorter gaps occur from time to time and each incumbent had his own method of recording, some giving a wealth of detail including age parentage, profession, address and cause of death; whilst others, particularly in the early years, give only the name and date of burial. The care with which the records were kept also varies considerably one addendum to an entry reads «... and also several sailors from the Hospital at different times.»

There are periods when the recording is clearly irregular and anonymous burials are not infrequent. In 1784 matters appear to have got out of hand; an enquiry was set up under the Consul General Sir John Hort to decide who had been buried in the previous three years without registration. Evidence was given on oath and the proceedings are recorded in detail which fill several pages of the register. 38 burials in 1781-82 and it seems others, were omitted at different periods, judging by the average figures.

A notable feature is the number of burials from the various British expeditionary forces which came to Portugal by invitation in the last quarter of the XVIII century and again during the War of the Brothers. And as, for most of the XIX century, Lisbon was an important base for the Royal Navy, there were many naval burials which, in some years, exceeded the number of all other types of burial.

THE MARRIAGE REGISTERS

«Joshua London and Eleanor Seymore were married ye 9th November».

That is the first marriage recorded in the Register opened in 1721, and until 1749, by which time 154 couples had been married, the records contain only this minimum information.

There are three Marriage Registers in the copy received from Doctors' Commons:

Book 1	1721-1794
Book 2	1765-1783
Book 3	1794-1807

There is a note in Book I in 1766 reading: «See the small vellum Marriage Register of which the following is a copy».

This was evidently Book 2 in which each entry is the same as in Book I but contains an additional paragraph giving the names of the witnesses and the signatures of the bride and bridegroom. What the function of Book 2 was we do not know. The total of marriages registered between 1721 and 1967 is 1,086.

From the terse entries in the early days the details given, by custom or by law, became greatly expanded after 1750. The bride and bridegroom signed the register and the names of witnesses at «fashionable» weddings sometimes run to twenty or more. Names noteworthy in Factory activities appear like a modern social register. Gerard de Visme, who financed the rebuilding of the Factory Hospital, today «The Parsonage», was a regular attendant. After the registers were re-opened in 1811, there was again very little information; the records have the appearance of having been copied from another source and abbreviated, the most likely source being the Consular Records.

BAPTISMS AND BIRTHS

The title of these registers was altered to Baptisms and Births but, before this was done, Canon Pope had frequently added the dates of birth in the earlier register. It was the custom, in the earlier days, to «save up» the baptisms in a family and perform them at one ceremony. There is one case when a mother and eight sons and daughters were all baptised on the same day, the eldest son being ten years of age. To modern eyes descriptions such as, «William, a black belonging to Mr. Bonsfield» or, when only one parent is named, the child is referred to as B.B. or base born, appear offensive. The important Mr. Gerard de Visme's only daughter, christened Emily, was registered as «the reputed daughter of Gerard de Visme by:.... born 18.3.87». She later became the wife of General Sir Henry Murray, K.C.B.

There are 1261 marriages recorded in these registers.

When this Society first took over the archives of the Portugal Branch of the Historical Association, disorganized and, one fears, incomplete, there was a fairly newly-started card index of all known notable British nationals who had played a part in Anglo-Portuguese history. To maintain such a record is a very tall order. After consideration it was decided to clean up this index, which was found to include many inaccuracies, and to rebuild it as a basis for future reference. A great deal of time and labour has been spent by the ladies of the Library Sub-Committee in doing this. They have succeeded in building up a source of information which will grow alongside our other activities and prove, it is hoped, a valuable and reliable source of information for future inquirers.

We are pleased to report a growing number of enquiries for information about ancestors who had lived in Portugal, and on other subjects, nearly all of which have been answered to the enquirer's satisfaction.

Please address requests for information to:

*The Hon. Librarian
The British Historical Society of Portugal
Colégio dos Inglesinhos
Rua São Boaventura, 5
1200 Lisbon.*

A. H. NORRIS