

Colonel Patrick Keightley interviewed by Mary Ingoldby 23 September 2013

Track 1

Patrick Keightley, younger son of Sir Charles Keightley Governor of Gibraltar 1958-1962.

Resume of Sir Charles Keightley's career.

PK's maternal grandfather had been in Gibraltar in the Devon Regiment; recalls stories of the Calpe Hunt.

PK believes his father welcomed his posting to Gibraltar, after the considerable stress of Suez; *he personally welcomed it enormously, He felt very honoured and very pleased*

Comments on strategic placing of Gibraltar during The Cold War.

PK went out in 1959 on leave from his regiment in Germany – struck by what an amazing fortress it was, full of servicemen, naval dockyard was still active, a regiment of infantry besides The Royal Gibraltar Regiment; The RAF North Front Station had a number of Shackleton seaboard patrol aircraft there

PK: Very little done to it since the war, very much as it had been...It seemed to be concrete bunkers stained by rust and rather a lot of barbed wire...there wasn't much tourism at that stage, one or two very good hotels, not a lot of people came to stay in great numbers.

MI speaks about promenade and the sea

PK: A problem with the airport because the runway was extremely short and the majority of aircraft couldn't land there so they landed in Malaga which meant they had to cross the frontier.

Majority of people from Spain came by road, to use the banking facilities, to buy duty free – there was a daily ferry across to Tangier.

PK arrived by British European Airways the first time, the following year from Germany flew in an RAF Canberra – ***lying in the front of the bubble of the Canberra and that was a quite different experience coming down onto the airport which I thought we would never make, it seemed to be all sea below me as we came in***

Confirmed view that if tourists were going to come to Gibraltar the runway would have to be lengthened.

Track 2

In 1961 PK wounded went over a landmine on patrol in Muscat in the Persian Gulf, working in co-operation with the Sultan's Armed Forces. Went to Gibraltar to recuperate; Millbank Military Hospital London first; PK speaks of generosity of Gibraltar people Sir Edward Cottrell sent him a box of half bottles of champagne to speed recovery.

Life in Gibraltar

Sailing; Bembridge wooden X Class sailing boats; PK's father had a dinghy, Alatea which was the name of the nun who was supposedly walled up in the convent; many reported sightings of her ghost by previous Governors and their families over the years.

PK's family never saw her – The legend of Alatea

Walk around the convent

PK: It was a stone faced building guarded by two sentries, went through a Victorian façade into the much older building where there was a broad staircase leading up to walkways around a courtyard. At one side a ballroom had been built on later and had been damaged when the ammunition ship Bedenham exploded in 1951 and it was still used and when the Princess Royal came to visit us we used it for receptions. On the other side were the main dining room and drawing room and from there was a new wing which had been built by General Napier of Magdala when he was there and that led out to my parents private rooms a little sitting room, bedroom and so on there

Recuperation, swimming, friends; Rosia Bay and swimming off Marbella – Alfonso Hohenlohe and Princess Ira of Furstenburg; Searching for the Governor's beach and bathing hut; ***There was supposedly a Governor's beach and a bathing hut off Marbella but all we had was a key to the bathing hut and we could never find it so it had disappeared into the mists of history***

Part of the life in Gibraltar to go backwards and forwards to Spain

Queens hotel Jaime Russo; bull fights; famed bullfighters of the time Antonio Ordóñez and Luis Miguel Dominguín; Going to the Sherry Bodegas. Guy Williams of Williams and Humbert used to invite us up there and Beltrán Domecq.

Marbella not built up then at all, the Marbella Club one of the first new builds, very worried about water situation at that stage; a chain of fishing villages the occasional pub run by one or two people from Gibraltar other than that completely Spanish and totally undeveloped for tourism. Sierra Nevada; before development of Malaga Airport people came by train which was an epic journey.

Relationship with the Spanish

At that time with the naval dockyard open many of the Spanish came over the border to work; good relationship with embassy in Madrid Peter Hope was the First Secretary kept in very close touch, a brilliant man; they were very helpful in conveying our feelings to the Spanish and saying that we felt that the borders should be kept open. The border was closed for extended periods...disadvantages to both sides, the Gibraltarians and the Spanish workers; the Gibraltarians could get to Spain by sea.

Relationship with the Governor of the Campo Area General Robles – an influential chap, important that we had an official visit from him and made a return visit;

PK: a launch was required for this visit to Robles HQ in Algeciras – the Royal Air force said they could produce some air sea rescue launches and then the Royal Navy thought they would like to help as well and they happened to have the Dartmouth Squadron which was a cruiser and three destroyers and so this great fleet went over to Algeciras, Darrell Bates who was Colonial Secretary in Gibraltar at the time said he thought it was probably the strongest naval force which had gone into Spanish territorial waters since the siege of Gibraltar....Robles delighted, prestige for him...

Smuggling and Spies

PK never heard about spies, ***I think there was quite a lot of classified material in Gibraltar, on underwater warfare, in England the Portland spies were arrested at this time;***

Smuggling – many many stories; the current one was of the chap who used to come across the border from Spain every morning and go back in the evening with his bicycle, when he was stopped and searched; never found anything; eventually transpired that he had been smuggling bicycles.

Relationship with the Campo Area, just over the border into Spain; visits to the Butes; horse riding at Campamento.

Track 3

MI: Convent had Spanish staff?

About four or five Spanish staff beside the British staff – British staff the Wheelers, Mrs Wheeler used to do the Princess Royal's hair.

MI: What did you eat?

PK: preferred Spanish food, paella, tortillas to go on picnics, majority of our food was probably Spanish but when entertaining British food was served as people expected it.

MI: Wine?

Spanish wine in the late 50s not really been tried in UK so nobody knew about it; Spanish sherry unfortified; and port, majority of wine still French and came through Saconne and Speed from the South of France

Distinguished guests

Princess Royal Princess Mary made an annual visit, she brought a lady in waiting; Gibraltar administration was very sophisticated, first class Police Force who dealt with all security arrangements.

PK: Gibraltarians delighted that she came, and invited her to open things and to large events that were going on while she was there; it did raise the profile of Gibraltar in the eyes of the British in England and reminded them that Gibraltar was still there and an important place

MI: What was the profile of Gibraltar to English people after the war?

It remained the Rock of Gibraltar in the language, people knew about it, I think that they viewed it as a rather curious sort of appendage, the Foreign Office viewed it as a menace because of relations with Spain – sections of the British public knew it well...always first port of call out of England for the Navy and the crews used to pour into Gibraltar... enormous income to some and annoyance to others – and because they got to know it this filtered back into the UK. To anyone to served no doubt of its importance in the cold war

Sir Charles Keightley was aware that the dockyard would eventually close in Gibraltar and realised that the Rock would have to encourage tourism. He encouraged improvements at The Rock

Hotel; had passage (known as Keightley Way) cut through the rock which opened up Europa Point to tourists; encouraged the Government to help with grants to extend the runway so that large aircraft could land in Gibraltar.

Montgomery

Old friend of PK's father served in Italy together and when Monty was CIGS father was in The War Office; visited Gibraltar a couple of times;

PK: a man of enormous charm and tremendously active, brilliant with the young, magnetic personality, difficult if under his command but PK never under him, used to come and visit and relax and see his old service friends, last visit was after coming back from El Alamein War Cemetery , most interesting to hear what he had to talk about.

PK recalls Onassis arriving in Gibraltar in his yacht and staying at the convent; Onassis was meeting Winston Churchill who arrived in Gibraltar by air and visited the convent

PK: (on meeting Winston Churchill) one of the most impressive moments of my life, even in old age had a distinct twinkle and knew exactly what was going on when he spoke and greeted you.

PK: Onassis was an amazing man, huge charm he had divorced Christina in between his first and second visit to us, my mother said she was in two minds as to whether to shake him by the hand or not...he entered the convent threw his arms wide and said Lady K the last time we met we were talking of mountains...she then knew why people married him...

PK recalls a difficult time for his father during the Algerian War; The French Generals were friends of the Governor and his family; he had a message from the Foreign Office to detain them if they came through Gibraltar.

PK: The French Algerian war was just coming to an end; the French generals in Algeria tried to hold a coup in 1961 and were clearly going to come back to Paris and try and take over the Government from De Gaulle and we got a message from the Foreign Office that were they to pass through Gibraltar on their way we were to detain them. Now these were men that we had met often and knew my father well, and he was a friend, so father told the FO that unless he was given a specific arrest warrant he would not see his way to be able to detain these officers who as far as the British

were concerned had not actually committed any crime, luckily they did not come through they showed the tact to go direct to France which was a great relief all round really.

Gibraltar's relationship with Morocco

PK gives historical context to British relationship with Morocco; Gibraltarian's relationship to Morocco, visiting for holidays and owning property there. Not many Moroccans in Gibraltar at this time.

Track 4

Gibraltarian administration.

Exco the Executive Council and Legco the Legislative Council – father sat on one and was represented on the other – the mayor of Gibraltar was Sir Joshua Hassan who was a member of both councils as were other prominent Gibraltarians. Sir Joshua Hassan was a very good mayor and First Minister, instrumental in various reforms.

PK speaks about independence in British Colonies; the Treaty of Utrecht; British attitudes to Gibraltar at this time; Gibraltar attitudes to Independence; the Governor determined that Gibraltar would remain British rather than go to the Spanish; establishment of the EU.

Relationship between British and Gibraltarians, Gibraltar a lovely place to be compared to 1950s post war Britain; Tourism, concerts in St Michael's caves.

Tunnels

The ones on the north face which were cut during The Siege were difficult to get to - it was a hard hat tour, an extraordinary view and engineering feat – more modern ones in WWII – a huge network of tunnels within the rock; there was a capacity for a complete hospital, magazines for explosive, difficulty in getting the explosives out after the war.

PK: Tunnels not entirely comprehensive, could easily get lost, driving a little jeep through the middle of the tunnels...it was an amazing experience going round hairpin bends coming upon low sections and vastly high sections it was quite a remarkable experience really.

Driving on the road at the top of the rock; the apes; the bird migrations from Europe to Africa; Language; returning to Gibraltar on honeymoon.

MI: What is your enduring memory of Gibraltar?

***PK: Staunch loyalty to Britain they were British to the core
they really treasured their British nationality***

*Compiled: December 2013
Copyright Reserved*