

A Short History of the Palacete de Cazulas



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The Sierra de Cazulas is steeped in history with extensive archaeological finds of the period when Almuñecar was conquered and ruled by the Phoenicians. Several interesting sites are today open to the public, including the Phoenician fish holding tanks, the remains of an early burial site and the remains of several Roman aqueducts and burial towers.

Observation towers are still to be seen strategically placed along the coast. One can easily imagine how it must have felt from these vantage points, sighting the first ships of an incoming invasion - in those days coming from the Moors.

There are a number of museums locally including those in Almuñecar and Salobreña. These offer an interesting overview of the Phoenician and Roman civilizations of the area.

In addition to the observation towers on the coastline, various castles were constructed on the highest points of land. One can see these in both Almunecar and Salobrena where extensive renovation works have been carried out to save them from total ruin.

The story of Cazulas itself dates back to the earliest records known in a document called " La coleccion diplomatica del archivo de la casa de Cazulas".

At the time it was believed to be an estate comprising over 1,300 hectares owned by a Moorish nobleman.

The Moorish Visir Abu-el Husayn b.Hani sold the estate to a Christian nobleman, Don Rodrigo de Ulloa on the 20th May 1492. This sale was concluded three months after the surrender of the last Moorish king Boabdil who ceded the city of Granada to the Christian King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella. This date is also well known to every schoolchild who remembers it as the year Christopher Columbus discovered America.

*The original sale documents
"The Escritura of
the Palacete de Cazulas".
Detailing the sale agreement in
Arabic.
Date 20th May 1492*



The deeds (La Escritura del Palacete de Cazulas) are in Arabic and describe Cazulas as "QAYULAS".

Don Rodrigo de Ulloa the new owner was mayor of the Castillo de Almuñecar after the reconquest from 1540-1550.

Following the death of de Ulloa it is believed that the estate passed into the hands of the De Castro family who retained it until the death of the "Marquesa de Montanaro" in 1972.

It is perhaps interesting to note that the population in the immediate area of Almuñecar and Otivar vacillated between only a few hundred and several thousand inhabitants.

In 1591 the first detailed statistics on population were made available. Between the years of 1600-1700 various epidemics decimated the population. More statistics were published in 1751 and 1778.

Plagues were a common feature of the area with the outbreak of yellow fever in 1801. Cholera between 1833-1840 and 1860-1870, plus a severe earthquake across Southern Spain in 1884.

During the 1800's when Napoleon overran much of Europe and was eventually defeated by Wellington, the Spanish declared their war of independence.

In 1810 a local hero and also mayor of Otivar, Juan Fernandes Cañas "El tio Caridad", fought against the French.

Three British men-o-war aided Spanish guerillas in an attack on the French held bastion of Nerja.

This part of Spain, mistakenly thought of as the Costa del Sol, is in fact known as the Costa Tropical. The valleys leading to Cazulas through the white pueblo villages of Jete, Otivar and Lenteji are situated in the Valle Tropical - so called because of its unusual tropical micro-climate.



Agriculture in the area consists of a wide variety of tropical plants and fruits including; chirimoyas (custard apples, aguacate (avocado), nispera (loquat), khaki (persimmon), platanos (banana and plantains),

mangos, lemons, oranges, figs, guava, lichee and many others.

Many of the chirimoya and avocado plantations were devastated by serious droughts caused by a severe drop in the natural water table and the resultant incursion of sea water undermining the majority of the fresh water sources. Fortunately this process seems to have been reversing over the last few years and the destroyed farms are now being replanted once again. For many generations the Palacete was owned by the De Castro family. The last resident was the Marquesa de Montanaro y Balsinas who died aged 82 in 1972.

The Marquesa who was born Maria del Mar Bermudes de Castro y Serriña, married three times. Her first husband when she was just 21 years old, was the Marques de la Nava de Barcinas, Conde Compomanes y Marques de Villanueva de la Sagra, The Marques apparently died of T.B.

An old inscription (dated 1839) found on wall of the olive oil storage barn



Her second husband born in 1898 was Francisco Allende Salza y Urbina, el Conde de Torvar. This gentleman is believed to have died of a heart attack in Madrid in 1938.

The Marquesa's last husband, Juan Izquierdo Groselles, was a "General de Division" who survived her and died at the age of 93.

For many years the Marquesa employed the majority of the local population on the estate. The remains of her timber mill "La Fabrica Sierra" are still visible adjacent to the Rio Verde. Most of the valley was covered in a mature pine forest that was almost totally destroyed in 1983 by a massive forest fire.

The Marquesa's father, Don Paco de Castro although untitled was a loyal friend of the King. He had in those days "Droigt du Seigneur", including the power to hang people from a gibbet he had placed on a nearby hill above the property that could be seen by the whole village.



The General Izquierdos Groselles epaulettes

Local history states that although he never made use of this particular right he did take advantage of many of the local ladies! This occurred one time too many and he was slain by a young local villager one night whilst on horseback near the Fabrica Sierra mill.

It is reported that the police rounded up every male inhabitant into Otivars' main square. They were told that unless the killer confessed then they would remain there indefinitely. At this point every male in the village put their hand up to admit to the killing.

It is said that a few weeks later a local man was arrested but was released two weeks later.

To this day no-one in the village will admit that they know who committed the crime.



The grave and cross of Don Paco de Castro located on a small hill near the Fabrica Sierra (the old timber mill) The inscription on the cross states that "He was killed treacherously on the 17th February 1898"

Apart from Cazulas the Marquesa owned a larger and more profitable estate called "Finca Del Moro" in Badajoz. She also owned property in Granada, Almuñecar and a large house in Madrid with its own internal private chapel.

During the Spanish Civil War the local village was controlled by communist troops. The house was ransacked Irreplaceable china was rolled down the hill until it smashed.

Furniture, paintings, religious artifacts and books were burnt in front of the main entrance. This included an antique wooden effigy of Christ and two of his disciples that had been in the chapel but on instruction from the Marquesa had been hidden in the loft of the chauffeurs cottage. No one would admit to where it was hidden until a young local

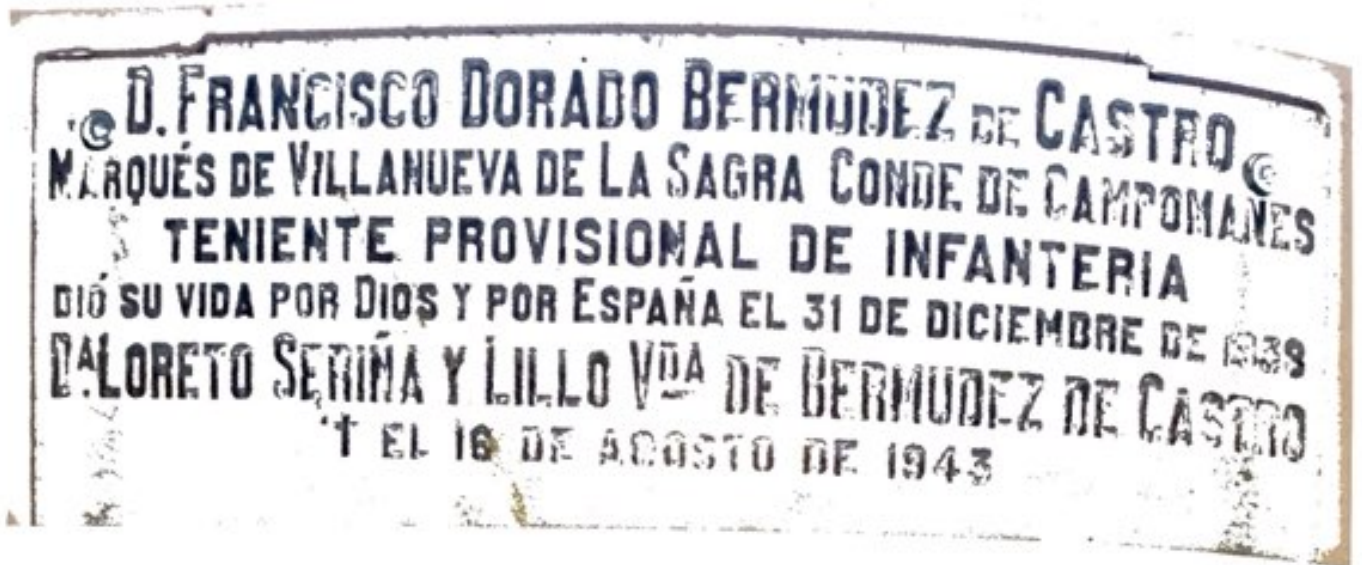
child was interrogated by troops and forced to disclose its whereabouts.

Just prior to the sacking of the Palacete the Marquesa and her immediate personal staff made their escape down to the river, thence to Almuñecar on foot and then finally returning to Madrid. It was four years before she could return to the Palacete.

The main road from Almuñecar to Granada, known as "La Cabra" because of the wild ibex found in the area was not constructed until the 1930's.



The Marquesa de Montanaro y Balsinas



Commemorative plaque to Don Francisco The Marquesa's only son

In the private chapel on one of the sacristy's walls is a plaque devoted to the Marquesa's only son. Don Francisco Dorado Bermudez de Castro, Marques de Villanueva de la Sagra, Conde de Campomanes.

He died a Lieutenant during the civil war at the large battle of Teruel on 31st December 1938 and is still sadly missed by everyone that knew him.

Following the civil war, the Marquesa refurnished the property entirely from her other estates. It is reputed that the dining room walls at the Palacete were surrounded by numerous paintings and that the drawing room held two Goyas, two Velazquez and a Murillo.



Photograph of the only remaining oil painting found at Cazulas (Located in the dining room adjacent to the fireplace.) Artist unknown.



The "Ali Baba" jar (Known as a "Tinaja" for storing olive oil. Located next to the old olive oil store.

After the war a regiment of Moroccan soldiers was billeted in several of the Palacete's outbuildings. The old olive oil storage jar "the Ali Baba" pot was used as a prison cell and one of the punishments for any wayward drunken soldier was to be left in it for 24 hours, only

being fed and given water through a small hole in the top.

Although there has been a house on the site of the Palacete since 1492 (date of the first deeds), It is unknown how many times it has been rebuilt or extended.

The present main front tower is believed to be in part over 200 years old together with the library and the dayroom. The Granadino style of architecture was to build a tower with a two storey building to one side, often only one room deep.

Cazulas however, has been adapted and added to several times over the years. The rear tower dates back to the 1920's. The kitchen area, as well as many of the outbuildings, dates to the 1900's.

The main walls, many of which extend over 1m. in thickness are constructed of rock in-filled with lime mortar.

To the right hand side of the front tower, the pockmarked tiled picture of "San Francisco de Paula", known as "Charitas", was used for target practice by the troops, during the civil war.

The recent discovery of several 1930's rifle shells confirm this (see collection of findings unearthed from the grounds of the Palacete in the library).



The main "Tower Bell" dates from 1890



*“Charitas”,
(See main front
elevation)*

The Marquesa’s gardens are now a substantial feature of the property. They had been severely ravaged over the years but have now been extensively brought back to life by the amazing efforts of Brenda Russell-Cowan including the major renovation of the footpaths, garden walls, swimming pool, the chapel and the lower mirador.

There are now a wide variety of specimen trees, speciality flowers such as Agapanthas and many more. Several of the palms date back to over 200 years. At the rear of the

stable block is the “Star garden”, now totally revived.

It was three months after our arrival that it was rediscovered and found to have an old religious grotto made up of rocks from the nearby Rio Verde. Known as “la Gruta de la Virgen de Lourdes”, the original virgin had been stolen but a new one was very kindly donated by our longstanding gardener Antonio Ruiz.

The grotto was dedicated to the Virgin of Lourdes following a visit made by the Marquesa, to Lourdes where she had successfully sought a cure for breast cancer.

The present virgin in the chapel was a replacement for the original carved wooden Christ figure which she brought back after the civil war from her estate in Madrid.



*The ‘Virgin of
Lourdes’ Grotto.*

The Marquesa died in 1972 leaving the Cazulas part of her estate to the Opus Dei. It is said that they sold the property to Ruiz Mateos, the chairman of a company called Rumasa which was the subject of one of Spain's largest and most scandalous bankruptcies. The bank sold the estate to a consortium of local Otivar villagers who split the estate up into an agricultural co-operative with over 200 members.

The co-operative sold off the various buildings on the estate in order to raise sufficient capital to repay the bank. The Palacete and its formal gardens, mill, chapel and outbuildings was sold in 1988.

Restoration work commenced in 1994.

The intention was to preserve the integrity of the building and make as few major alterations to the style and character as possible.

Modern services, 3 phase electricity, water supply, gas, telephone, wifi, security system and fire prevention facilities were installed.

The pool was remodeled, the chapel restored, the mill totally refurbished and transformed into a multi-use room for conferences, weddings etc...

Each bedroom in the house now has its own private bathroom.

Two men were employed for nine months just to reactivate the original Moorish gardens that were in a disastrous state.

The swimming pool, which had been a water storage facility for the co-op was comprehensively updated with all the necessary filtration and heating apparatus to bring it up to modern day standards.

A set of before and after photos dating from 1994 to today are to be found in the small museum giving some idea of the range of



work involved in restoring a very old house that had lain empty for over twenty years.

A labour of love by a British couple keen to see an amazing house preserved back to its original glory.

The Palacete was inaugurated in June 1998 as an exclusive private residential boutique hotel. In 2003 it was decided to specialize as an up-market private self-catering rental property,

Special Features at the Palacete:

- 11 Bedrooms all with their own private bathrooms.
- Staff room with en-suite shower room.
- Magnificent arched drawing room with dominant central marble column and a part-timbered paneled dining room.
- Library, day room/TV/conference room.
- Large country kitchen with marble work surfaces (semi-professional use).
- Museum/games room, Central patio, Cloakroom.
- Own fully restored consecrated private chapel.
- Hard tennis court, numerous terraces, 30ft swimming pool, Childrens badminton court, Childrens wendy house and play area. Moorish gardens along the lines of the Alhambra.
- Large overspill car park.
- Maid and gardening service included in the rental price.

The Palacete de Cazulas is highly suitable for: family groups, weddings, conferences, speciality groups (keep fit, yoga, musicians, artists, poetry, bird watching, star gazing, wild flower collectors - more than 400 species in the area, sculpture groups, film shoots etc etc...

Capacity in the main house: 22 guests

Capacity in the Palacete's two adjoining cottages; 12 guests (6 guests in each) all with own shower rooms

For full details and prices please see our website:
www.cazulas.com

Email: info@cazulas.com

Telephone: 619 040309 686 929288









Coat of arms



The De Castró coat of arms

How to reach Cazulas by car

