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EDWARDIAN ARCHITECTURE IN THE CAMPO DE GIBRALTAR

by Ana Aranda Bernal

In the last years of the 19th century, a number of social and economic factors led to the establishing of a very special way of living in the Campo de Gibraltar among a small section of the wealthy inhabitants of the area, particularly those who had a cultural connection with England, either because they worked for British companies, or were natives of British Gibraltar living on Spanish soil, or were Anglophile Spanish aristocrats.

This style of living required a special ambience, which was provided by the architecture of their homes. Over a short period of years a number of buildings were erected completely alien to the local tradition but which were in a style current in most other parts of the world, although they could hardly be termed *avant-garde*.

There have been studies of Victorian and Edwardian constructions in two regions of Spain. The first was in the Cantabrian cornice where the Royal Family spent their summers in San Sebastian and Santander, and which were influenced by the English participation in the Basque economic development from 1880 onwards. The second in the mining region of Huelva which was exploited by British companies and required dwellings for their expatriate employees.¹ English influence in the Campo de Gibraltar has been in evidence since 1704 which resulted in the special relation between town and country similar to that found in Britain.²

Towards the end of the 19th century, a number of businessmen from Gibraltar established works of great importance for the infrastructure of the area round the colony. These were the railway which connected the Campo de Gibraltar with the rest of the Peninsula, and which resulted in connecting Algeciras by rail with the junction at Bobadilla by way of Ronda.³

The principal promoter of this project was Louis Anthony Lombard, a Gibraltarian of French descent on his father's side, who was born in the colony

in the 1830s.⁴ In 1863 he became captain of the wooden merchant steamer *Arab*, which had been built in Newcastle in 1857, engaged in conveying passengers and cargo from Gibraltar to the nearby ports of Cadiz, Malaga and Tangier. Lombard was therefore well aware of the need to improve communications in the area. During the 1880s he had expanded his business, but never dropped the idea of building a railway to Algeciras and he looked for finance in London for his project. This was a propitious moment as Britain's rail network had been almost completed by over a hundred different companies and some of which were looking abroad for new ventures.

Lombard was successful in his negotiations and was able to form The Algeciras-Gibraltar Railway Company with a capital of forty-five million pesetas.⁵ In 1888 the company received its authorisation from the Spanish Government and Lombard became a shareholder of the rail venture in the name of his company, L H Fava & Co. That same year he bought a property known as El Recreo in the Villa Vieja quarter of Algeciras which at the time was almost uninhabited. This meant that he would live close to the works he had initiated. His new house, when completed, was to set a fashion which others followed.

By the time the railway opened in 1892, the company had realised that the business required other investments which it did not hesitate to finance. The potential passengers of the railway were not only ordinary travellers, but it was anticipated that the majority of its clients would be tourists, who since the middle of the 19th century had frequented the mountains of southern Andalusia, the delights of which included meeting real live bandits who infested the Serranía or mountain regions.⁶

It was obvious that Algeciras could not be the point of entry for the tourists, as there was no proper port facilities. So passengers from abroad would have to disembark at Gibraltar and the company would run a ferry service from there to Algeciras where they could embark directly onto the train as the railway was able to reach the waterfront. In 1893 two wharves were built, one in Gibraltar and the other in Algeciras.⁷

The wharf in Gibraltar had problems. At low tide there was not enough water for the boats to come alongside. The local boatmen annoyed by the building of the landing stage, which deprived them of their usual customers, refused to ferry the passengers ashore and sometimes they had to wait for some hours before they could set foot on shore. In every other respect the company's passengers were provided with every comfort. In addition those who paid extra could sit on the deck in comfortable wicker armchairs, under colourful awning and admire the smart uniforms of the crew.

In Algeciras they could step directly ashore on the company's high landing stage whilst other ferries had to anchor off-shore and their passengers were left to the mercy of the vociferous boatmen, who competed for their custom to set

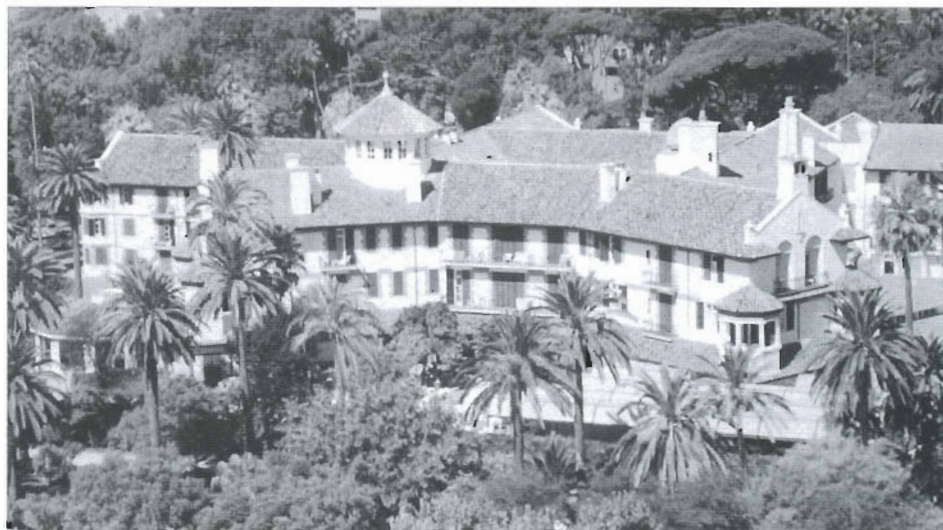
them ashore on the breakwater.

The train journey was very picturesque. In addition to being the most comfortable way to travel to the north of Spain, it was also used by those who went to shoot in the Almoraima, the Duke of Medinaceli's estate in Castellar de la Frontera where there was a special halt. The people of the towns in the Serranía de Ronda used to bring their produce to sell in Algeciras and there buy the manufactured goods they needed.

The company decided that the steamships and the new landing stages were not enough to attract sufficient passengers to the railway and so without skimping the investment they decided to build two luxurious hotels for the



The Hotel Reina Cristina in Algeciras, as originally built (*above*), and rebuilt after the fire (*below*)



comfort of the tourists and so provide a complete service. The Iberian and Mediterranean Hotels Company Ltd was formed for this purpose and which built the Reina Cristina in Algeciras and the Victoria in Ronda.⁸

The company's activities subsequently led to the construction of the first buildings which showed English influence in the area: railway stations, hotels and private dwellings for the senior employees. However the company was not alone in this. At the same time, Larios, the leading Gibraltar family, was spreading its investments from the Rock into the surrounding area and extending its social connections, and established itself in the Campo area. The family built themselves houses in the English style in Guadacorte, Monte de la Torre and also rebuilt their country house in San Martin del Tesorillo.

It is interesting to see that this activity was not limited to great houses, because it was possible also to build more modest dwellings in the same style as the plans were readily available, as will be shown. A style different from the traditional Spanish taste was also important to Gibraltarians, who considered themselves more culturally advanced than the Spaniards.

We should not forget that however attractive and acceptable the architectural style, it can only be built if the economic situation of the owners permits it. In Gibraltar there were many businessmen, merchants and professional men of means who, as is usual wanted to improve their living conditions and at the same time demonstrate their success to the neighbours. The thing they most desired,



The Hotel Victoria in Ronda



Monte de la Torre, the Larios residence in Guadacorte

living on the crowded Rock, was space and this is what they now obtained.

This expansion of living space had not been possible before. For military reasons, before 1870 they had not been allowed by Spanish law, to build or repair masonry buildings in the area beyond the frontier. We saw this happening in the case of Aaron Cardozo, the leader of the Jewish community of Gibraltar in his day, who had excellent relations with the Spanish authorities, and spent part of the year in Spain. In 1817, when he wanted to take his sick wife to San Roque, the newly re-established Inquisition imposed such humiliating conditions on his stay that he refused to go to Spain. From then onwards he became an ardent supporter of the Spanish liberals.⁹

After the restrictions were lifted in 1870, many of the leading Gibraltar families bought properties in La Linea and Campamento, which in many cases became their main places of residence. But the opening of the new steam ferry to Algeciras, which made communications fast and comfortable, encouraged many Gibraltarians to build their houses there.

The Gibraltarians tended to congregate together and not mix with the Spanish population and they built their houses in the mediaeval Villa Vieja, a sparsely populated area south of the Rio de la Miel.¹⁰

The building of the Reina Cristina Hotel favoured the development of Villa Vieja. The hotel added to the attractions of the suburb and gave it a sophisticated

atmosphere, which enabled those locals who had country properties in the area to sell them at higher prices.

Before I list the Gibraltarians who introduced English architecture into the Campo de Gibraltar, I want to examine the origins of the plans they were based on and their characteristics.

Some leading English architects designed some of the houses. Ralph Selden Wornum signed the plans for the property constructed by Larios in Guadacorte and Thomas Edward Collcutt and Stanley Hamp, those of the hotels Reina Cristina and Victoria. We must also remember that there were books of plans by leading architects published, first in Britain, and after 1850, abroad, which enabled such buildings to be constructed. These collections avoided the direct contact between the architect and the client and resulted in a quick and cheap way of introducing the most desired designs to remote areas. The Campo de Gibraltar was an ideal candidate as there was a prosperous middle class with the money to indulge in their construction.

A study of the British style of architecture from the middle of the 19th century to the first decade of the 20th which, although they had much in common, were quite distinct – Victorian and Edwardian. Taking into account the date of the constructions in the area and their particular characteristics, the majority may be classified as Edwardian, although there was a Victorian element with some local influence.¹¹

In spite of the differences there were some unifying influences, in the internal arrangements and a more austere decoration. They were built of English materials. They mostly, though not always, had flat-tiled roofs and stylised chimney pots grouped together. The Victorian penchant for decorative brickwork is restrained, and although some buildings have exposed timber framework, the facades are usually rendered and the decorative brickwork is reserved for columns, pilasters and to frame the blank spaces round the doors and windows. Corner pieces of artificial stone were also employed for visual effect.

The asymmetry of plan characteristic of Victorian buildings is softened in Edwardian architecture, but there are still prominent small porches and bay windows.

The windows are normal swing type and not the typical English sash-windows, but the two leaves are often separated by glazed panels. They are always protected by slatted shutters, painted green, known locally as *persianas*, a fashion that became universally popular in all constructions of the period, particularly in San Roque and Los Barrios. Although these characteristics apply to the grand dwellings built at the summit of Villa Vieja of Algeciras, around the Hotel Reina Cristina, it is necessary to make a distinction in respect of the humbler semi-detached buildings on the eastern slope facing the Bay.

If we first study the upper level of the suburb, we must initially mention the largest property which was owned by William James Smith, a Gibraltarian business man who ran the Smith, Imossi shipping company and also had a house in Scud Hill.¹² He was comfortably off and had a good eye for property investment. He was a leading member of Gibraltarian civil society, was a member of the Grand Jury, and served as British Vice Consul in Algeciras. Although he did not develop the site for some years, he always meant to bring up his family in these spacious surroundings,

He was a pioneer before the social advantages of the area had become established.

His house was built on strictly Edwardian lines and set in a park so popular in Britain. It was not just a garden with scattered trees and plants, but was properly landscaped and the architecture blended with its surroundings.

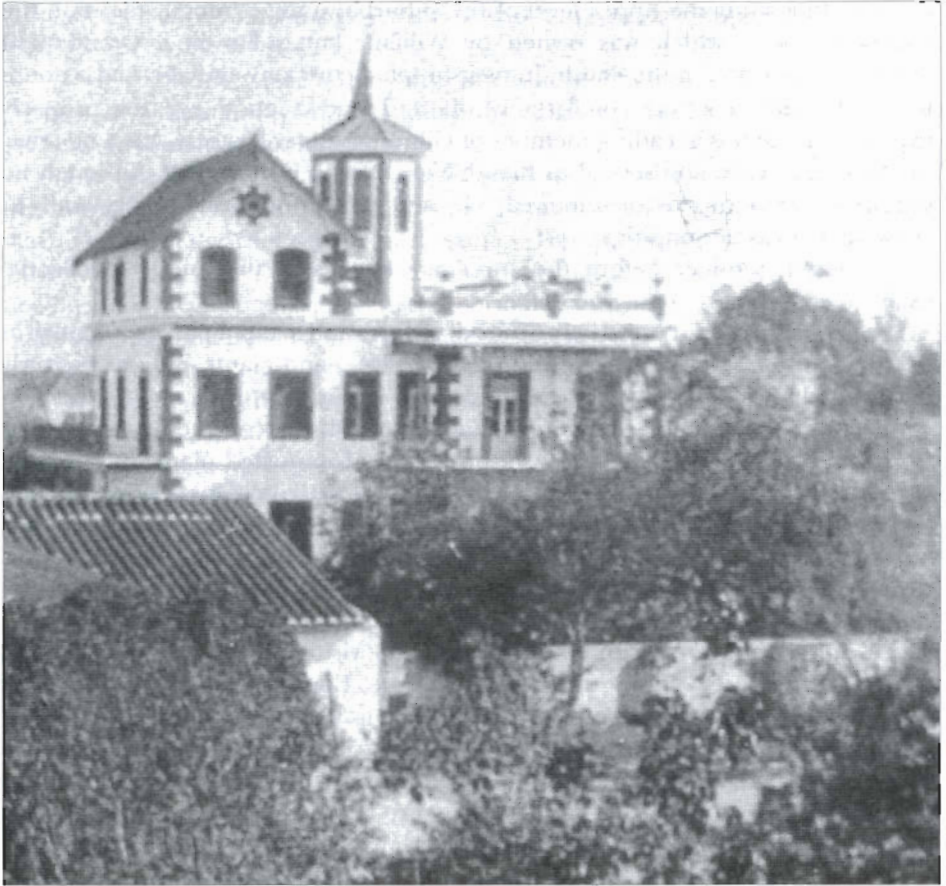
The British habit of collecting plants from all the continents meant that during the 19th century there was a profusion of imported plants in Gibraltar which were adapted to local conditions. It is therefore from Gibraltar the William Smith imported the species with which he filled his park. He also had a picturesque rockery at the back of his house. Smith lived in this house until his death in 1920, after which it passed to his son who lived there with his family until the Civil War. The house was sold in 1966.

During the Algeciras Conference of 1906, the visiting dignitaries were housed in the great houses of the suburb. By this time, Louis Anthony Lombard, had already settled in his house of El Recreo, which was built on the western edge of the suburb. Today it has altered a great deal.

In 1910 a new wave of building started. From this date the neighbouring houses of Adolph Ruggeroni and the Gaggero brothers, the two semi-detached houses of novel design, were constructed by William Stevens and the small but elegant country house of William Lombard.

Adolph Ernest Ruggeroni was an engineer, British subject and resident of Gibraltar. He was also consular agent for the Republic of Argentina in Gibraltar and the Campo de Gibraltar, that is to say he administered the emigration of Spaniards to that young country, an activity that was very lucrative.¹³ He was married to Victorina Conte Gaggero which meant that he was related to the enterprising middle class that was so active in the Campo de Gibraltar at the turn of the century.

From his house he enjoyed a panoramic view of the Bay, the Rock and the town of Algeciras on the north bank of the Río de la Miel. His house was conspicuous by its graceful tower, the spire of which rose above the three floors of the dwelling, which in later years was to be the cause of its destruction. During the first few days of the Civil War, the building was bombarded from the sea because of the flag flying from it. None of the witnesses can remember today flag



Adolph Ruggeroni's house

which was flown. Ruggeroni died three years later, and Leonor Teresa Carlota, his only daughter, did not continue living there long. She moved to Santander when she married Pedro Villegas Casa, a military man and the property was sold.

In 1909, the London sailor, William Stevens Johnson, who was living in Gibraltar in Cumberland Road, presented plans, prepared by the engineer Mariano del Pozo, to the Ayuntamiento of Algeciras. Pozo was at the time involved in building many public and private buildings in the city. The plans were for two semi-detached houses of simple design which showed Edwardian characteristics. Johnson's widow, Claudina Justa and his four young children inherited the house in 1923.

Guillermo Luis Lombard Damonte, the only son of Louis Anthony Lombard,

settled in Seville as agent for John Mackintosh but spent time in his house in Algeciras. By 1912 he had built himself Villa Patricia, which he named after his Gibraltarian wife Patricia Mendoza, whom he had married in 1888. In the 1940s the Cervera family who had already bought Ruggeroni's property also bought this house.

One of the last constructions at the top of Villa Vieja was also the largest and most spectacular, but the one which was demolished earliest. I am referring to Villa San José, the splendid mansion of the brothers Joseph and Manuel Albert Gaggero. They too were Gibraltarian businessmen who had established their fortune by working for the shipping company M H Bland & Company. This was one of the leading companies in Gibraltar, which had been founded in 1821 to establish shipping lines to Tangier, Tetuan and Melilla. They later became the principal agents for the emigration to the River Plate (Argentina), as well as acting as agents for the Mersey Shipping Company which maintained a line between Britain and Morocco.

Seen from the town of Algeciras, this house on the opposite bank of the Río



Villa San José, the residence of William James Smith



The study of Villa San José

de la Miel was impressive by its size. From 1911 onwards, the Gaggero family spent their summers there, but one of the sons of Manuel Albert, who had established most of his business in Algeciras and who had twelve children of his own, made Villa San José his permanent residence. Some of these daughters relate how their mother used to tell them that on Saturdays they would go to the top of the tower. From there they could see which friends from Gibraltar were disembarking from the ferry some to go to their houses in Villa Vieja or others to the Hotel Reina Cristina for the evening's festivities.

So much for the grand houses with large gardens which covered the summit of Villa Vieja and of those owners that had moved there permanently. There were also the semi-detached houses that were built on the narrow piece of land that sloped steeply to the beach. This ground was very steep and not ideal as a building site but it had a magnificent view of the Bay and the Rock.

The land was bounded by two streets known as Marqués de la Ensenada and the Paseo de la Conferencia or Chorruelo. The Paseo was so exposed to the sea that on more than one occasion it was almost washed away by storms.

This type of building had become popular in Britain at the end of the Victorian age, when new suburbs were being planned.¹⁴ Houses of this style were built in Bellavista, the English suburb built by the Rio Tinto Company in Huelva.

They were known as terraced houses, and generally had a narrow front some six to ten metres wide, which in the Paseo de la Conferencia appeared offset as the second storey was set back. The result was a tall building which formed a kind of staircase until you reach the front of the buildings. They did not have their fronts towards the sea but were entered through the upper street of the Marqués de la Ensenada, and thus faced Villa Vieja.

In spite of the different designs they all conformed to the Edwardian type. They had many features in common and confirm that the taste the Gibraltarians showed in their houses in Algeciras was the same as the residents of the suburbs in England.

The small gardens were on the lowest part of the hill, at sea level, and were never so over-grown as to obscure the view from the windows. There were always a few fishing boats drawn up on the beach below.

These buildings were constructed at approximately the same time as the larger buildings on the summit. The first buildings, in the centre of what afterwards became the Paseo de la Conferencia, had been completed by 1899. By 1906, at the time of the Algeciras Conference, the six houses south of the steps which lead to the street of San Nicolás, had been completed. Starting from the south, the order of properties were, the garden of Villa Smith, followed by the houses of James Imossi and his wife Rosa Parody, the two brothers Francis and Edward Labrador, Anthony Mifsud, a second house of the Labrador brothers, and then the house built in 1899 by Manuel Portunato, (Fortunato?) which was inherited in 1902 by María Dolores Artesani; and finally that of Francis Angel Imossi, which was built in 1899, to which a floor was added in 1902.

The steps I mentioned before provided access to the top of Villa Vieja from the beach, and had been built privately on ground donated for the purpose by the architect Francis Angel Imossi and the merchant Bartolomé Sacarello.¹⁵ Sacarello was a member of a Genoese family who had started a business in Gibraltar in 1888 importing coffee. Their house in the Paseo de la Conferencia was called Villa Pepita, after Bartolomé's wife, Josephine. This house was demolished in the 1950s and the Red Cross hospital was erected on the site.

In later years the development was completed with three semi-detached houses which stretched to the entrance of the Paseo. The last big alterations in the Edwardian style were made when the property of José Juanals Roura was enlarged, the only property owner in the area at the time, who was not a Gibraltarian. He was a Catalan businessman who dealt in cork and was the president of the Chamber of Commerce of Algeciras.

The work was normally carried out by local contractors, though undoubtedly they were given very specific instructions for the construction. It is possible that Francis Angel Imossi supervised the building of his own house as he was an

architect. We know that in 1902, Antonio Gurrea, a builder from Algeciras added a floor to his own property and built the houses of the brothers Francis and Edward Labrador. When Juanals Roura decided to enlarge his house he employed the bricklayer Diego Lucuix.

The heyday of the Gibraltar houses, that is to say, when they had all been completed and had not yet been abandoned or sold to people from Algeciras, was during the second decade of the twentieth century. Afterwards different factors led to the houses in the Paseo de la Conferencia losing their original owners although not their British stamp. Almost all the people who had had the houses built were over fifty at the time, so they did not live for very long afterwards, and in a number of cases their heirs settled in England and so were quick to sell.

The history of the years after the first world war, altered the position of the Gibraltarians in the Campo area. Gibraltar's main role during that war had been as a base for repairing and victualling ships, and in forming and protecting convoys of merchant ships. This would not have been possible without permissive Spanish neutrality, and was not really due to the strength of the guns or garrison of the Rock. The land and sea communications between Gibraltar and the hinterland remained open, and although in 1916, British officers were no longer allowed to cross the frontier on horseback, they were still able to cross on foot if in mufti (civilian clothes).

Thus, the population of Gibraltar and the surrounding territory were only marginally involved in the war. At the same time the inhabitants of the colony were able to profit from the business opportunities it presented, and particularly those who had built their houses in Algeciras. The increased movement of ships and men increased the commerce and there was a substantial rise in the imports from Spain which favoured those with connections in that country.

After the war and the inauguration of the Republic, Gibraltarians were not so welcome in Spain as their holding properties in La Linea, Campamento and Algeciras, was considered to present dangers to Spain. As Manuel Azaña, the socialist prime minister, informed the Council of Ministers in 1932, the excuse that she had to protect the property of British subjects could be the excuse for Britain to annex the Campo de Gibraltar and it was therefore necessary to stop all further purchases.¹⁶ At the same time, the wide ownership of motorcars and the new road system meant that Gibraltarians could enjoy the Spanish countryside by making excursions for the day.

In addition at the beginning of the civil war on 18th July 1936, the fighting in the area and general instability, meant that most British subjects living in Spain took refuge on the Rock. We should remember that Algeciras was bombarded on the 20th and 25th of July and 2nd and 7th of August, although the losses inflicted were not great.



A view of the Villa Vieja (Old Town) of Algeciras

After the capture of Malaga by Franco's forces, there was a return to a more normal life, and many Gibraltarians returned to their properties across the border. Even the governor, Sir Charles Harrington, resumed hunting in the lands of Los Barrios and Castellar. But the old style of life in the Villa Vieja of Algeciras which has so attracted the Gibraltarians and had infuriated many local, was at an end. Nothing was the same after the first world war, and even greater changes were to come with the second.

Those people of Algeciras who had the money to do so were not particularly attracted by the houses in the Paseo de la Conferencia, with the exception of two doctors: Buenaventura Morón, the manager of the Hotel Reina Cristina, who in 1911 bought the property of Manuel Portunato, and Emilio Burgos who bought the house of Anthony Mifsud in 1946. The Gibraltarians had been attracted to the Villa Vieja because at the time it was isolated from the rest of the town, and this was not something that commended it to the Algeciras middle class. It would take many years before Villa Vieja was to be absorbed by the growth of the town, and communications and municipal services were improved sufficiently for it become a desirable residential area.

Only three out of the nine of the original houses in the Paseo de la Conferencia survive today, and two of them have been largely rebuilt. This shows the neglect they have suffered over the years.¹⁷

Notes

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2. Aranda Bernal, Ana, *La arquitectura inglesa en el Campo de Gibraltar* (at present being printed).
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4. Lombard, Anthony, 'The Lombard family' *Gibraltar Heritage Journal 3* (1996)
5. Tornay De Cózar, Francisco, 'Cien años del ferrocarril Algeciras-Jimena' *Almoraima 3* (Algeciras 1990).
6. Lavour, Luis, 'Turismo romántico en el Campo de Gibraltar' *Carteya 8* (Algeciras 1976)
7. Tornay De Cózar, Francisco, 'La navegación a vapor y el puerto de Gibraltar' *Almoraima 13* (Algeciras 1995).
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9. Sánchez Mantero, Rafael, *Estudios sobre Gibraltar* (Cadiz 1989), Benady, Tito 'The Cardozo family' *Gibraltar Heritage Journal 1*, 46.
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14. Jackson Allen, A, *Suburban development, Life and Transport: Semi-detached London* (1959)
15. Aranda Bernal, Ana, and Quiles García, Fernando, *Historia urbana de Algeciras* (Seville 1999)
16. Azaña, Manuel, *Memorias políticas, Obras completas, IV* (Mexico 1968)
17. I am indebted to Patrick Sacarello for old family photographs and to Rafael García Valdivia of the Instituto de Estudios Campogibraltareños for the photograph of Villa Smith.