The Machete of Madeira: A British Perspective

O Machete da Madeira: uma Perspectiva Britânica

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ABSTRACT

During the nineteenth century the machete de braga (hereafter referred to as machete), a relative of the Portuguese cavaquinho, was widely known throughout Europe. Today, however, the machete is mostly known outside its homeland of Madeira as one of the forerunners of the ukulele. Although the main focus of this article is the British interest in the machete in this period it is first necessary to establish how the British connection with Madeira and the machete stretches back to the fifteenth century, through a systematization of the literature on this musical instrument.

Keywords: Machete; Ukulele; Braguinha; Cândido Drumond

RESUMO

Durante o século XIX o machete de braga (doravante referido como machete), parente do cavaquinho português, era amplamente conhecido em toda a Europa. Hoje, no entanto, o machete é conhecido principalmente fora de sua terra natal, a Madeira, como um dos precursores do ukulele. Embora o foco principal deste artigo seja o interesse britânico pelo machete neste período, primeiro é necessário estabelecer como a ligação britânica com a Madeira e o machete remontam ao século XV, através de uma sistematização da literatura sobre este instrumento musical.

Palavras-chave: Machete; Ukulele; Braguinha; Cândido Drumond

1. Introduction

During the nineteenth century the machete de braga (hereafter referred to as machete), a relative of the Portuguese cavaquinho, was widely known throughout Europe. Today, however, the machete is mostly known outside its homeland of Madeira as one of the forerunners of the ukulele. Ukulele historians Jim Tranquada and John King have firmly established that Portuguese immigrants from Madeira introduced the machete and its cousin the rajão to Hawaii in 1879. Within a few years of arriving in Hawaii three of these immigrants – Manuel Nunes (1843-1922), Augusto Dias (1842-1915), and Jose Espirito Santo (1850-1905) – had merged the machete and the rajão to create the Hawaiian ukulele. It was my interest in the history of the ukulele that initially led me to play and research the machete. Physically both instruments are very similar in that they are small guitars with four strings. But while the machete is commonly tuned D4-G4-B4-D5, the ukulele takes its tuning from the top four strings of the five string rajão and is tuned G4-C4-E4-A 4. One of the most unique features of the machete, as noted by Portuguese academic Manuel Morais, is that during the nineteenth century despite its folkloric associations the machete was accepted as a society instrument. The research of Morais drew attention to the sophisticated repertoire and concert performances of Candido Drummond and, in so doing, highlighted a peculiar interest in the machete amongst British residents and visitors to Madeira. My own research has, therefore, sort to better understand the British fascination with the machete and determine if this was purely a local phenomenon, amongst residents and tourists, or whether the machete was also known and played in Britain and if so, to what extent.

An intriguing fact is that despite being a Portuguese instrument the machete was, during the nineteenth century, mostly written about by English speakers. Anglophone travel literature on Madeira from this period includes guidebooks, travelogues, letters and diaries. None of these writers were musicologists but what they lacked in expertise they made up for in often vivid, anecdotal accounts. One of the most valuable things to be learnt from these accounts is how the tiny four strings guitar from Madeira captured the hearts and minds of the British in the nineteenth century.

Although the main focus of this article is the British interest in the machete in this period it is first necessary to establish how the British connection with Madeira and the machete stretches back to the fifteenth century. Shortly after Madeira was colonised by the Portuguese a young Scotsman by the name of John Drummond arrived on the island. According to David Malcolm in *A Genealogical Memoir of the Most Noble and Ancient House of Drummond of 1808* John Drummond was the youngest son of Sir John Drummond of Stobhall, Scotland. The young Drummond, who "possessed a bold and adventurous spirit", (Malcolm, 1808, 233) travelled widely and eventually made Madeira his home. His descendant was none other than the celebrated composer and machete player Candido Drummond; a name which reflects the local and foreign influences that have co-existed in Madeira for many hundreds of year. The name Candido being Portuguese and Drummond being Scottish.

2. A Haven for British Merchants

Today Madeira is mostly considered a remote tourist destination but during the Age of Sail its strategic position in the North Atlantic Ocean, combined with its temperate climate and fertile lands, made the islands a vital hub of trade and commerce. Ships, such as Captain Cook's *Endeavour* (1768), would stop off at Madeira to load up with beef, greens, water and wine before commencing the long voyage to the New World and beyond. According to David Hancock by 1815 "because of its location along major Atlantic wind and water currents, it [Madeira] became one of the principal provisional nodes in a vast transatlantic trading web that had been spun in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries". (Hancock, 2009, 1) Madeira was first settled by the Portuguese in the 1420s and while distinctly Portuguese the islands soon became a haven for foreign merchants and traders.

By the end of the fifteenth century Madeira was the world's largest producer of sugar, or white gold. Italian born Christopher Columbus was a sugar trader in Madeira before he was an explorer. When sugar production moved to Brazil in the seventeenth century the islands had already started to produce wine. Sugar plantations were replaced with vineyards and by the eighteenth century Madeira wine was considered amongst the finest in the world. The lucrative wine industry attracted foreign merchants, many of whom were British. While small in number this group exercised considerable power. During the seventeenth century they established their own British Factory and by the beginning of the nineteenth century "they were the richest, most powerful of the foreigners". (Hancock, 2009, 14)

The British considered Madeira of such strategic and commercial importance they twice occupied the islands during the Napoleonic Wars to prevent them from falling into French hands. For hundreds of years Madeira was recognised as a haven for British merchants; a place where young opportunity seekers could make their fortune. Victorian novelist Charlotte Brontë fictionalised the bounties of Madeira in her best selling book *Jane Eyre* (1847) when her heroine suddenly inherits a fortune from a mysterious uncle, John Eyre, who had been a trader in Madeira. The extent of the British influence in Madeira is reflected in the writing of Portuguese historian Dr Azevedo who, in 1873, complained "that Madeira is largely anglicised, in race, costume, ownership of land, as well as in its trade and money; English (after Portuguese) is the language spoken most frequently… it is only national pride which contrives to keep us Portuguese." (Gregory, 1989, 9)

The earliest known image of a machete suggests the British interest in Madeira went beyond wine and trade and extended to music and culture. A portrait of Eliza Eleanor Murray, housed in the Museu Quinta das Cruzes in Funchal, and dated 1785/1798, shows her wearing traditional costume and holding a small guitar assumed to be a machete. Eliza was the daughter of Scottish wine merchant Charles Murray. Murray was the British Consul in Madeira from 1771 to c.1801. He owned a lavish estate which now forms part of the popular tourist attraction Monte Palace Tropical Gardens. The artist is unknown but Eli-

za's dress includes the traditional red blouse, long skirt, white crossed shawl and cap. She is holding a small guitar with a bent-back pegbox. Due to the perspective only the underside of the pegbox can be seen but four tuning pegs are clearly visible indicating this was an eight string instrument comprising four double courses. The instrument is most probably a four course machete. What music was played on this instrument is unknown as the earliest known manuscripts to date are the collection of booklets for the use of James Duff Gordon, another wine merchant, of 1843 and The Drummond Collection of 1846.

3. Candido Drummond

To what extent Drummond's Scottish heritage ingratiated him to the British residents of Madeira is a matter of speculation but it must have added an air of intrigue and familiarity. He certainly seems to have inherited the "bold and adventurous spirit" of his ancestor for in choosing to compose pieces based on popular European dance forms he was able to transform a simple folk instrument into a virtuosic concert instrument that appealed to both locals and foreigners.

While other machete manuscripts from this period have come to light none are as musically refined or technically advanced as the Drummond manuscript. Testimony to Drummond's virtuosity, as found by Morais, was a report in the Funchal newspaper *Defensor* of 1841 in which Drummond's performance on the machete at the Philharmonic Society of Funchal received "thunderous applause". (Morais, 2003, 101) John Dix also wrote about these concerts in his travelogue of 1850. They included performances by music teachers and amateurs and were "attended by the Portuguese, the British residents, and many of the visitors to the island". (Dix, 1850, 72) The machete featured regularly and while Dix considered the guitar "a finer instrument" (Dix, 1850, 73) he acknowledged that "there are one or two players in Funchal who have attained wonderful proficiency in playing on it. Their execution is astonishing". (Dix, 1850, 73) The casual suggestion of "one or two" players is not particularly helpful but as this was the period in which Drummond was most active it is reasonable to assume he was one of the performers. The prominence of the machete, combined with the small number ("one or two") of "astonishing" players, provides a glimpse into the celebrity Drummond must have enjoyed.

Unfortunately very little is known about Drummond's life. Morais was unable to locate a birth certificate but did establish that Drummond was active from at least 1841 (the year of the review in the Defensor). An indication of when Drummond died was provided by the German musicologist Herman Mendel who noted in his *Musikalisches Conversations-Lexicon* of 1880-3 that the great machete virtuoso "Candido recently died, had earned a real reputation for himself in the concerts of Funchal [my translation]". (Mendel, 1883, 548) Nothing is known about Drummond's upbringing or his musical training but, as already mentioned, the majority of pieces in the Collection are in the form of European ballroom dances. These include twenty-one waltzes, six polkas, five quadrilles, seven marches and two boleras. The style and compositional structure of the pieces indicate Drummond was a trained musician. Furthermore,

there are also four highly virtuosic pieces in the form of theme and variations. An enticing detail on the title page of the manuscript is the number 1 which suggests there was at least one other collection. Thus far, however, no other manuscripts by him have come to light.

4. Appearances Can Be Deceptive

Modern audiences are as astonished by the capacity of the diminutive machete as those of the nineteenth century. Having performed Drummond's pieces to British and Australian audiences over a number of years I have found a common reaction to be: "I don't know what I was expecting but I wasn't expected *that*!" Undoubtedly the machete has always had a remarkable ability to amaze those who encounter it. In 1840 Robert White was sufficiently impressed to include a useful description of the machete in a guidebook "containing medical and general information for invalids and visitors".

> The machete is peculiar to the islands; it is a small guitar, with four strings of catgut, which are tuned in thirds, with the exception of the lower two, which have an interval of a fourth. This instrument is used by the peasantry to accompany the voice and the dance. The music consists of a succession of simple chords, but, in the hands of an accomplished player, the machete is capable of much more pleasing harmony and the stranger is sometimes agreeably surprised to hear the fashionable music of our ball-rooms given with considerable effect on what appears a very insignificant instrument. (White, 1851, 38)

It is not surprising that White, an Englishman, was surprised by the machete. Guitars at this time had six strings and by comparison the machete not only appeared miniature, it had two less strings. American John Dix disparagingly called it a "dwarf guitar" (Dix, 1851, 72) and Lady Wortley called it "toy-like". (Wortley, 1854, 233) Despite its physical appearance, however, White found the machete to be versatile and capable of producing music both simple and complex, rustic and urban.

5. A Paradise in the Atlantic

Not all English speaking writers were as objective about the machete as White with many romanticising Madeira into a Garden of Eden inhabited by happy, guitar playing rustics. William Combe considered that "the inferior state of rural life in Madeira... with a trifling addition from fancy, might serve almost for a scene from Arcadia". (Combe, 1821, 77) His "trifling addition" included "peasants" playing guitars of various sizes and singing "at their labour". He does not use the name machete but "guitars of various sizes" could easily include one.

The Arcadian theme was taken up by Henry Nelson Coleridge, the editor of the poetic works of his uncle Samuel Taylor Coleridge, who stopped off at Madeira on his way to the West Indies in the 1820s. He declared "O Madeira, Madeira, O thou gem of the ocean, thou paradise in the Atlantic!" (Coleridge, 1825, 14) and goes on to describe "days of enchantment" and "ethereal moments" with "golden clusters of orange and lemon" and "breezes of intoxication". Madeira is compared to "the Garden of Eden and the bowers of Acrasie and Armida". (Coleridge, 1825, 14) Like so many visitors to Madeira in the nineteenth

century Coleridge, who described himself as a "Rheumatic Traveller", (Coleridge, 1825, 9) was seeking respite from a medical condition. His rapture can almost be forgiven for, as John Turnbull observed, Madeira offered a "striking contrast" to the "putrid and condensed atmosphere" (Turnbull, 1813, 4) of England. The temperate climate, clean air, breathtaking scenery and exotic vegetation must have seemed to British travellers like a scene from a fable or fairytale. Often, at the centre of these fantasies, we find the machete.

This is poignantly illustrated in the work of invalid traveller, writer and illustrator Andrew Picken who spent two years living on Madeira in the late 1830s. Two scenes from his *Madeira Illustrated* (1840) include illustrations of the machete. In the first plate a group of children are gathered around a boy who is playing the machete. An older boy, holding a pole with several live fowls hanging from it, is standing watching. He seems to be on his way to market but has been distracted by the music. The city of Funchal can be seen in the background. Next to the group a woman is sitting spinning wool. Picken describes this scene as representing a "group characteristic of the city". The mood of leisure, contentment and plenty is amplified by a dish of untouched food in the foreground.

Picken's second plate shows a group of country people "returning to the mountains" after "a festival, or market-day at Funchal". The group is "headed by the musicians of the party, who relieve the toil of the march by the inspiring sounds of well-known native airs". (Picken, 1840, 4) The musicians include two men playing guitars and a boy playing the machete. In both plates the toy-like machete is placed in the hands of children. In Picken's eyes the music transforms the "toil" of the group's labour into an "inspiring" march. Once again the scene is idyllic. In the background a church, or convent, is so perfectly blended into the foliage it seems part of the natural environment. The group have their heads turned towards a shepherd who, like a Priest, watches over them benevolently. The lush vegetation, baskets laden with fruit and well dressed country folk depict harmony and abundance.

Picken, like Coleridge before him, portrays Madeira as a Garden of Eden. His enchantment with the machete is elucidated by his commentary: "Often too the dead stillness of the night is broken by the soft sweet notes of the machettinho, accompanied by the measured tread of some mountaineer, returning to his far home among the hills". (Picken, 1840, 4) As Picken only hears the "machettinho" he seems to be using the diminutive sentimentally rather than referring to a smaller version of the machete which Candido Drummond is reported to have both played and made. (Morais, 2003) In Picken's narrative the toy-like machete helps to transport the reader to the mountaineer's "far home among the hills". His narrative creates a scene of fairytale charm, and while undoubtedly the natural beauty of Madeira supports this idea, it also needs to be viewed in the context of Picken's own hope that his stay on the island will miraculously cure his illness. Sadly, this was not the case and he died of tuberculosis in 1845 at the age of just thirty.

6. Branching Narratives

For many travel writers, such as Picken, the machete acted as a portal through which the listener was transported into a fantasy world. As Laura Fosberg discusses in *World's Beyond: Miniatures and Victorian Fiction* the fascination with miniature things can in fact be viewed as a trope in all Victorian Literature. "Miniatures offered a multiplicity of branching narratives that blurred the boundaries between science and imagination, between what is and what could be." (Fosberg, 2021, 2) Portraying Madeira as an island Paradise inhabited by happy, rustics playing miniature guitars allowed travel writers, and their readers, to escape the harsher realities of their own lives. In so doing they created narratives that juxtaposed the image of the island paradise with the harsher realities of the social and economic conditions of Madeira. The reality was that poverty and unemployment would eventually lead to a wave of mass migration that would take the Madeiran's beloved machete to other places, including Hawaii.

7. Changing Fortunes

During the nineteenth century Madeira suffered a series of economic and social catastrophes. The once lucrative wine industry was in crisis; caused initially by over-production, which led to an inferior quality of wine, and then by disease. In 1851 the vines were struck by *odium tuckeri* and then in 1872, before they had a chance to recover, by phylloxera. Gregory points out that as the century progressed "the Madeira wine trade dwindled to virtually nothing at all and the British merchants departed in droves; by 1855 only fifteen out of seventy wine shipping firms remained". (Gregory, 1989, 27) With the failing wine industry came unemployment and poverty. The island's population faced even greater hardship when, in 1852, the potato crop was struck with disease, thus destroying a vital source of food. This disaster was followed by the cholera epidemic of 1856 which killed an estimated 10,000 out of a population of 105,000 (Gregory, 1989, 92). Despite these turbulent times both Candido Drummond and the machete are shown to have thrived. This can be attributed to the fact that with the advent of faster steam ships more visitors were coming to the islands. The Age of Sail and the golden age of wine had ended but Madeira was becoming an increasingly popular travel destination and health spa. By 1859 the islands were attracting up to three hundred invalids per year (Gregory, 1989, 96).

The increase in tourism spawned an increase in travel writers and it was undoubtedly in the vested interest of the travel industry to present a positive picture of Madeira. For many writers, like Andrew Picken, the machete provided such an opportunity. Another writer, Lady Emmeline Stuart Wortley, (1854) was particularly rhapsodic in her account.

> And now evening approaches, and the tinkling sounds of the machete are heard at the end of the street. A large party come on, half dancing, half gliding along, to the tune the instrument is playing. The party appear to be a group of the peasantry returning home from some merry-making with their city friends. (Wortley, 1854, 233)

It is as if the "tinkling sounds" of the machete have cast a spell over the dancers allowing them

to almost levitate along the street like magical beings. She is more pragmatic, however, when discussing emigration "which has been somewhat considerable here lately" (Wortley, 1854, 362). As Wortley notes between 1839 and 1849 the population decreased by 5,677 with most leaving "in hopes of finding their deplorable position ameliorated". (Wortley, 1854, 363)

Numerous writers, including Charles Wainwright March, describe "the destitute condition of the island population" which he considered "incurable, save by emigration". (March, 1856, 54) In 1849 George Peacock, a visiting Dean of Ely, said he had "nowhere seen, not even in the worst parts of Ireland, more intense misery than among the people of this island. A stranger is assaulted, whenever he appears near these destitute and over peopled districts, with crowds of mendicants, whose emaciated and diseased appearance shows too plainly that their food is insufficient and unwholesome." (Gregory, 1989, 92) An even early account by Fanny Burney (1834) observed that "Almost every man, woman, and child that one meets in the country demands alms." (Burney, 1834, 262-3) The stark reality of these accounts would do little to attract tourists but they were often tempered by scenes of revelry involving the machete.

Take, for example the enchantment of March.

> The vintage bringing into Funchal the peasantry, with their goat-skins, makes a fiesta – a frolic; and of an evening you hear every where in the environs the simple harmony of the machete – a small guitar, used to accompany the voice and dance. Everybody dances here, and everybody sings, if not with much grace, with great abandon; and as the delicious evenings tolerate these festivals out of doors, you see and hear all around you merriment and innocent revelry. (March, 1856, 75)

In the eyes of March the combination of wine and "the simple harmony of the machete" allow the "peasantry" to forget their "destitute condition" as they dance and sing "with great abandon". Once again it is a scene worthy of Bacchus or Dionysus, the Greek/Roman God of wine, who, by freeing his followers of inhibition allows them to dance without care or fear.

The *Metropolitan Magazine* of 1846 continues this theme.

> Oh but he is a merry fellow, the Madeira peasant. See him returning some few hours afterwards, elated with a little profit, and not a little wine, playing gaily his machete, and singing in chorus at the top of his voice.

Despite his "little profit" the "peasant", like Bacchus, is shown to find contentment in music and wine. But as numerous writers, including Burney had noted, despite the abundance of wine "drunkenness is very rare". (Burney, 1834, 291) Time and again the cultural and social importance of music and the machete, and the joy it inspired in the Madeirans, was used to inspire more British visitors to the islands. To this end travel literature from this period should be viewed a juxtaposition of facts and fictions which, nevertheless, form an important part of the social history of the machete.

8. Higher Capabilities

Not all travel writers were enamoured with the machete. The ailing Picken had found the notes of the machete "sweet" and the native airs "inspiring". John Dix on the other hand found the

sound of the machete "thin and meagre" and the native singing "grating to the ear". (Dix, 1850, 72) Koebel described the native singing as a "wailing dirge" but found the strumming of the machete "distinctly pleasing". (Koebel, 1909, 179) Although opinion varied, the curiosity the machete inspired is indisputable. It is also evident that visitors encountered the machete in various settings. Like Picken and Burney, Wortley described the machete being played in a rustic setting. But, like White, she also noted its "higher capabilities when played by a masterly hand". (Wortley, 1854, 233) She goes on to say that "the most brilliant waltzes and mazurkas of the best German composers" could be played on the "toy-like" machete. (Wortley, 1854, 233)

By the time Ellen M. Taylor's *Madeira: its scenery and how to see it was* published in 1882 the machete was sufficiently well known to warrant being included in her directory of shops and services. Taylor gave two options for purchasing machetes. "Machetes, both large and small are well made by Rufino Telles, 56, *Rua da Carreira*, and vary from 3,000rs. to 5,000rs." (Taylor, 1882, 28) Alternatively, the Fancy Bazaar of A.C. Ribereiro, 261, *Carreira* offered a variety of tourist items including straw hats, embroidered eggs, Madeira peasant's caps, pressed sets of Madeira ferns, wicker chairs and machetes. (Taylor, 1882, 26) It is interesting to note that the machete was included both as a souvenir and serious instrument. The "well made" machetes of Rufino Telles were clearly better quality instruments and intended for those considering having lessons. (Taylor, 1882, 28) Taylor conveniently included a list of "teachers" with recommendations for those interested in learning French, Portuguese, piano and machete. Lessons on the machete with Senior Barboza were 600rs per hour, slightly less than lessons on the piano which were 700rs per hour. Until recently we were left to wonder which of these foreigners had learnt to play the machete and whether it had just been a holiday diversion. Having read extensively about how foreigners had reacted to the machete within its homeland I then began to investigate the presence of the machete in England.

9. The Machete in England

The most famous indication that the machete was known in England are the photographs taken by the writer Lewis Carroll in Oxford in 1857/8. Carroll's subjects were the three Liddell sisters, including the famous Alice who inspired *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. The three girls are dressed in Madeira lace and each holding a Madeiran machete. These instruments were most likely bought as souvenirs when the girl's parents had visited Madeira. Further research revealed that the British interest in the machete went far beyond holiday souvenirs. The most compelling evidence of this was presented to me by Sarah Clarke, one of my colleagues in the Consortium of Guitar Research at Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge, who told me that the British based composer and guitarist Catharina Pratten (1824-1895) had composed at least two pieces for the machete.

Pratten (née Pelzer) was a German composer, virtuoso and teacher. As Stewart Button points out in his thesis *The Guitar in England 1800-1924*,

the most important players in England in the nineteenth century were Giulio Regondi and Catharina Pratten. Both were foreign and both were child prodigies. After touring Europe as a child Pratten's family settled in England in 1829. Pratten soon became known as London's most prominent guitar teacher and famously taught Queen Victoria's daughter, Louise, Princess of Wales. There is no record of Pratten visiting Madeira but organologist, guitar expert and author James Westbrook has a photograph, taken in 1872, of Pratten holding a machete. The origins of her instrument are unknown but her interest is an indication of how highly regarded the machete was at this time.

Pratten's impromptu *Maud (from Songs Without Words and Sketches)* bears the inscription "composed for the machette" and was dedicated "To Miss Sullivan". Miss Sullivan was perhaps a student who had visited Madeira and returned with an instrument. It is interesting to note that Pratten, like many other English writers from this time, used the spelling "machette". This may have been done to differentiate the little Madeiran guitar called machete from the Spanish broad bladed knife also called machete. On paper both words look the same but the "ette" ending suggests (at least to English speakers) a French pronunciation as in laundrette, gazette and cigarette. *Maud*, like the Drummond pieces, has a guitar accompaniment. The second piece, called El Sol de Sevilla, is from Pratten's *Duetts for Two Guitars on Popular Spanish Airs and Dances*. As the Spanish title suggests this piece was not specifically written for the Madeiran (Portuguese) machete but was originally a "Duett for two Guitars". Underneath the title Pratten suggested "The top line may also be played by the Violin, Concertina or Machette in the absence of the 1st Guitar". Like Drummond, Pratten treated the machete as a melodic instrument. That said, *Maud* begins with a six bar Prelude with the machete playing strummed chords. The piece is followed by an eighteen bar Variation which she suggests can be played by either "Machette or Mandolin".

Although not stated on the score both *Maud* and *El Sol de Sevilla* require the machete to be tuned D4-G4-B4-E5 (making it an octave higher than the top four strings of the guitar) rather than the D4-G4-B4-D5 tuning used by Drummond. The DGBE tuning is most obvious in *El Sol de Sevilla* where the left hand fingering indicates the melody is to be played in ninth position with the first finger playing the C# on the ninth fret. This fingering requires the first string to be tuned to E. No fingering is provided for *Maud* and while it can be played with the top string tuned to D it is less comfortable under the hand. The two tunings are mentioned in a brief entry on the machete in the *Grove Dictionary of Music of 1900*. The D4-G4-B4-E5 tuning, used by Pratten, is said to be the tuning often used by "guitar players". This would certainly make sense for anyone with a knowledge of the fingerboard of the guitar as the position of the notes is the same on both instruments. The Pratten pieces are not, however, the only examples of the "guitar players" tuning. This tuning is also found in the collection of machete manuscripts housed in the Dolmetsch Collection in the Horniman Museum, London.

The Horniman collection of manuscripts comprises five hand written, stitched booklets con-

taining a variety of pieces including duets, songs, popular songs, dance tunes and a method. All of the booklets bear the inscription "for the use of James Duff Gordon" and are dated from 20th May to 13th June 1843. The only clue to the author, or copyist, is the name Xavier. The text for the booklets is in Portuguese with 'Madeira' written before each date indicating that they were all written in Madeira. The first booklet, a tutor (Principios), begins with the open strings tuned to the "guitar players" tuning of DGBE. From this we can gather that both tunings were used in Madeira and the "guitar players" tuning was not just used in England. The other booklets in the Dolmetsch collection contain folk tunes from Madeira as well as traditional Scottish songs such as *The Bonny Banks of Doon, Auld Lang Syne, Within a Mile of Edinburgh Town, Auld Robin Gray and The White Cockade.*

The nature of the repertoire suggests Gordon had an affinity with both countries. The name James Duff Gordon is, however, somewhat confusing given the number of Duffs and Gordons associated with the Madeira wine trade since the eighteenth century. James Duff of Gordon was a Scottish wine merchant of Gordon, Duff & Co, Madeira. He died, however, in 1812. There is a James Gordon Duff included in the list of subscribers for Andrew Picken's *Madeira Illustrated* of 1840. Records show that he died in London in 1845 at the age of fifty-seven. It is conceivable, but not certain, that James Gordon Duff and James Duff Gordon are in fact the same person. Either way the original owner of the Horniman manuscripts had spent some time in Madeira and was clearly a dedicated student of the machete. The manuscripts were found in the case of an instrument made by *Jacinto R. Saldenha, Madeira* (also housed in the Horniman Museum). It is a fine instrument with rope binding and a sunburst rosette.

Small but significant clues give insight into the presence of the machete in Victorian England. These include the aforementioned photographs of the Liddell sisters and Madam Pratten, the Horniman manuscript, the compositions by Pratten, and the listings in Taylor's guidebook; all of which point to an interest in the machete that was both casual and formal. Another tantalising clue is an advertisement for "machette" strings in the *Musical Opinion and Trade Review* of June 1903. The advert was placed by G. P. Guivier & Co. of Great Marlborough Street, London, who were "Manufacturers and importers of every kind of string for Violin, Viola, 'Cello, Double Bass, Banjo, Mandoline, Guitar, Zither, Harp, Machette, &c., &c., always in stock." The fact that machete strings were being sold in London suggests a local market. The year 1903 is, however, relatively late and it is worth bearing in mind that at this time the ukulele, the Hawaiian adaption of the machete, was becoming known. Both instruments are small guitars with four strings and to the casual eye the two instruments might easily be confused. This can be seen in an article in *The Musical Herald* of 1st February 1900. When a reader asked for "some idea of the nature of the instrument machette" the editor responded "The machette is an instrument of the guitar family, exactly similar in form (only of course very much reduced in size), and might, in fact, be taken for a model of the Spanish guitar." The writer goes on to say "other names for the machette are Octavilla, Tibia, and Ukulele." The oc-

tavilla, however, was a Spanish instrument with six pairs of strings tuned a fourth lower than a bandurria so the writer's knowledge is questionable. Nevertheless, the suggestion that "ukulele" is another name for machete is an indication of the ukulele's growing popularity and how the two instruments were often confused.

10. Mrs Oakley and Her Machete

One of the most important discoveries I made in my research was that the machete had featured in numerous amateur concerts in England from at least 1869. The first indication of this is found in the *Islington Gazette*, dated 14 May 1869. The reviewer noted that "Mrs Oakley's artistic playing of the machete, in two duets with Mrs Phelps, 'Portuguese Airs' and 'Carnival of Venise,' and 'Madeira Country Airs,' was well appreciated, and received rapturous applause." The connection to Madeira is most obvious in the title 'Madeira Country Airs' but a further connection can be traced to the name Phelps. The Phelpses had been wine merchants in Madeira since the eighteenth century. The letters of the Phelps family of Madeira, published by their descendants in 2016, indicate that Mrs Oakley's maiden name was Phelps.

Clara Phelps (1831-1897) was born in Madeira in 1831. She was the sixth daughter of Elizabeth and Joseph Phelps. As Joseph was often away in England trying to sell wine his wife Elizabeth frequently wrote to him about the health and education of their children. Elizabeth, who played the harp and the piano, both taught and oversaw the musical education of her children. The children were encouraged to sing and learn a variety of instruments including piano, guitar, Portuguese guitar and machete. In 1847 Elizabeth informed her husband that "Clara and H[arriet] continue to practise their stringed instruments much to the satisfaction of Candido and Cabial [Cabral]. We really owe those two gents a large debt of gratitude for their instruction." (Forrest et al, 2016, 43) This is the only known direct reference to Candido Drummond teaching the machete, and significantly, to a British resident. Clara was aged sixteen at the time. Her elder sister Harriet was learning the guitar from Manuel Cabral, who arranged the guitar parts for the Drummond Collection.

A few months later (14th September 1847) Elizabeth again wrote to her husband, "I am quite ashamed of the time Candido & Cabial [Cabral] have spent upon Harriet & Clara. Should they not be paid somehow?" (Forrest et al, 2016, 56) Despite the lack of remuneration the lessons continued and Elizabeth was clearly delighted with Clara's progress. "Clara's machete has obtained unbounded applause from the Corral up to the top of Pico Ruivo." (Forrest et al, 2016, 56) Although lessons are not mentioned again Clara and her sister continued to study their instruments for nine years later, in 1856, their sister Mary described their performance at a "grand dinner party". "Kitty seemed tired and did not entertain her guests with much spirit so this task principally fell to Harriet and Clara, who performed with their voice and on the guitar and machette, without however, I thought, eliciting the admiration they deserved." (Forrest et al, 2016, 294)

Clara is frequently credited as being a talented musician. As well as playing the machete she learnt singing "very diligently" from a "Mr Rakeman". (Forrest et al, 2016, 295) Her sister Mary described her voice as "really beautiful". (Forrest et al, 2016, 239) Mr Rakeman, who is described as "a capital musician and master", was a visiting music professor who stayed with the family. (Forrest et al, 2016, 295) In 1856 Clara was engaged to John Oakley, a young clergyman who was employed as a tutor by Lady Margaret Littleton. (Forrest et al, 2016, 300) John also enjoyed singing and Clara, when writing to tell her brother of her engagement joyously declared, "It was singing duets together as did it I believe." (Forrest et al, 2016, 300) The couple's mutual delight in music is also mentioned by Bella Phelps in 1858. "The young people are as happy as possible and the whole house is musical." (Forrest et al, 2016, 334)

John and Clara were not married until he was ordained a priest in 1860 at which time they moved to 29 Charles Street, St James, London. Later that year Clara's father Joseph wrote to tell his son Arthur (10th September 1860) "We have got a piano, & last Tuesday we had some friends to dine with us, among others Clarinha & her husband. She played the machettinho de braga exquisitely; I never heard her play better." (Forrest et al, 2016, 386) The letter was written in Aldeburgh, Suffolk, and establishes that Clara had taken her machete to England. Joseph appears to be using the diminutives "Clarinha" and "machettinho" affectionately much in the same that Andrew Picken had used the term "machettinho". Clearly the two men had known each other as Picken made a dedicated to Phelps at the beginning of his book. "I beg to make my acknowledgement to the Rev. Cyril W. Page, and to Joseph Phelps, Esq., to whom I am indebted for material contributed to the present work."

Clara, now known as Mrs Oakley, continued to play her machete in England. Her performance venues reflect the clerical appointments of her husband. John Oakley's first position was as a vicar at St Saviour's, Hoxton. The 1869 concert in which Mrs Oakley and Mrs Phelps performed duets was to help raise money for a new organ. Ten years later, on 22 February 1879, Mrs Oakley was listed as one of the "principal soloists" in the Apsley End Village Club final concert of the season. The following week the Hemel Hempstead Gazette reported that one of the disappointments was that "Mrs Oakley, who was to play the pretty little instrument, the Machette" was unable to attend due to "illness". It is noteworthy that the writer shows some familiarity with the machete and implies Clara performed frequently.

In 1882 John Oakley became Dean of Carlisle. On the 8th November of that year the *Carlisle Express and Examiner* reported on a concert by "The Dean and the Working Men of Caldewgate" in which Mrs Oakley "sang with sweetness several popular ballads, and fairly brought the house down by her clever performances on the machete, an instrument which the bulk of the audience seemed to have seen for the first time." A few weeks later, on the 25th November, the same newspaper reported on the first in a series of "pleasant evenings for the people" put on by the Dean and involving a variety of readings and musical performances. Mrs Oakley again featured with her machete. The reviewer noting, "that la-

dy's deft manipulation of that pleasing little instrument seeming to give the utmost pleasure". The Oakley's concerts in Carlisle continued until 1884 when John was made Dean of Manchester. Their final concert was at Gatesgill and once again "Mrs Oakley's quaint instrument, the machete, gave its usual great satisfaction". The Oakley family became well known for putting on concerts for the underprivileged and one of the features of these concerts was clearly Mrs Oakley and her machete. While there is little indication of her repertoire the machete was clearly a source of great fascination and delight. As noted in Dean Oakley's obituary in the Westmorland Gazette of 14th May 1890, "He devoted much time to the popularisation of music, and with members of his family often gave free concerts for the people, which were widely appreciated".

11. A Deeper Understanding of Candido Drummond

The revelation that Clara Oakley née Phelps was not only a student of Candido Drummond but had introduced the machete to audiences in England has broadened our understanding of this unique instrument and the impact it had in the nineteenth century. Nevertheless, many questions remain unanswered. For instance: *why were Drummond and Cabral not being paid for teaching Clara and Harriet?* As indicated by Clara in a letter to her brother Arthur on 11th August 1856 other teachers were engaged on a *quid pro quo* basis. "We have the German Professor Mr Rakeman staying with us this summer, on a mutual accommodation principal. We keep him & feed him & he teaches Mary & me music." (Forrest et al, 2016, 302) Drummond and Cabral were local and there is no mention of them being accommodated by the Phelpses. Elizabeth had admitted she was "quite ashamed" of the amount of time they had spent teaching her daughters and had even asked her husband to bring them something from England. Given the difficult economic times it is particularly curious that they should be teaching for 'free'. It is only possible to speculate on their exact motive but their association with one of the most prominent British families on the island would have given them access to the exclusive and wealthy British circle of Funchal society.

Despite the increasing economic and social hardship amongst the majority of the population the privileged classes continued to hold lavish entertainments such as parties, balls, concerts and soirées. Local musicians such as Drummond and Cabral must have regarded these events as vital sources of work. A letter by Clara's brother Charlie dated 29th January 1849 provides a glimpse into the kind of social life enjoyed by the rich. "We have had some capital fun here this winter, I have been to a ball at Mrs Gordon's, Lord Northland's, Lord Grosvenor's, and another at the Club & one at home." (Forrest et al, 2016, 68) The following day the letter continues, "We had a splendid ball, lots of dancing, Mamma was introduced to the Countess of Sheffield & to Lady Cockburn (pronounced Coburn). We expect a Portuguese prince here soon & a ball will be given in his honour at the Club." (Forrest et al, 2016, 68) Another letter by Charlie, this time dated 13th January 1852, confirms that Cabral and Drummond were two of the musicians engaged for these events. "There have

been some very nice parties this year... Mr Lowe played a great deal of music last night to a highly delighted audience, as also Candido and Cabral on machete and guitar". (Forrest et al, 2016, 123) From this we can now establish that the musical partnership of Drummond and Cabral included composing/arranging, performing and teaching. Furthermore, they were actively cultivating both foreign, notably British, and Portuguese followers.

Given that the majority of pieces in the Drummond Collection are in the form of European ballroom dances, and we now know that Drummond and Cabral were providing music for balls, it is worth exploring whether the Drummond pieces were also used as dance music. As no dance steps were included in the manuscript it is natural to assume that he was composing stylistic music for a listening audience; the concerts at the Philharmonic Society of Funchal are certainly proof of this. But, as dancing was one of the most popular entertainments of fashionable society and we know that Cabral and Drummond played at these events, it is also plausible that his pieces were used as dance music.

12. The Terpsichore of Madeira

An early insight into the social life on the island was provided by Edward Bowdich who found that "A soiree in Porto Santo [a neighbouring island] forms a singular contrast to the weekly soiree of a private family in Funchal. From fifty to sixty persons, and sometimes more, meet together, spontaneously, about eight o'clock, without a single effort on the part of the lady of the house; four or five musicians are in attendance, and while one large room is thrown open for cards, the largest is reserved for quadrilles and sarabands." (Bowdich, 1823, 99) Bowdich indicates that balls and parties occurred regularly enough, and to such a select group, that many formalities, such as invitations, were not even necessary. He also considered that balls held in private houses were "much more splendid than those of the castle". (Bowdich, 1823, 99) If four or five musicians were engaged for such events the demand for suitable music and musicians in a small community must have been considerable. Furthermore, given the deteriorating economic situation, private balls and parties would have offered musicians a valuable source of income.

In 1834 John Driver attended a social occasion in a private house where he found, "some sixty or seventy persons were enjoying themselves in dancing, with music and cards". (Driver, 1838, 9) The elderly were playing cards while the, "younger and lighter-hearted part were footing it in the gayest manner." (Driver, 1838, 9) Almost twenty years later the Phelps children were attending similar events. Charlie Phelps, writing to his brother Arthur in 1849, provided a list of parties he had attended during the winter. "We have had capital fun here this winter, I have been to a ball at Mrs Gordon's, Lord Northlands, Lord Grosvenor's, another at the Club & one at home, & I am going to another at the Gordon's tonight." (Forrest et al, 2016, 68) His sister Harriet noted, somewhat disdainfully, that "my brothers and sisters go to parties every night & sometimes 2 or 3!" (Forrest et al, 2016, 125) Andrew Picken had found the Portuguese "indefatigable dancers",

listing the dances as "the usual routine of quadrilles, gallops, waltzes, & etc." (Picken, 1840, 5) But as the Phelps children indicate, dancing was mutually enjoyed by foreigners and locals alike. Clara Phelps wrote of her delight in attending a ball put on by one of the Portuguese residents. "We were at a grand theatrical affair & ball the other night at Count Carvalhal's which I enjoyed, as I danced every dance & had good men to go. I hate slowness." (Forrest et al, 2016, 257)

An account by Ellen M. Taylor (1882) confirms that the machete was used for dance music.

> The machete, rajão and machete de Braga are native instruments, and have music especially suited to them, most of which is of the nature of a march or quick dance; a band of two or three, with violin and cello accompaniment, forms exceedingly good music for dancing, and is sometimes engaged for evening parties. (Taylor, 1882, 62)

By this time Candido Drummond had died but the penchant for dancing and "evening parties" was nothing new and can be traced to at least the 1820s. The instrumentation may have changed from machete and guitar to a "band" of machete/s, violin and cello but the premise was the same. Throughout the century the fashionable members of Funchal society, and visitors to the island, had amused themselves by attending concerts, balls, parties and other entertainments which involved music and dancing.

Drummond's output was predominantly waltzes, polkas, marches, boleras and quadrilles which, as noted by White, was "the fashionable music of our ballrooms". If these pieces were composed as stylised dance music, in other words music based on dance forms that are intended to be listened to, they are extremely short and repetitive. Many of the pieces last only a minute and a half to two minutes and this includes several repeated sections. Curious to know if these pieces might have been conceived as dance music I asked Ellis Rogers, an expert on eighteenth and nineteenth century dance and author of *The Quadrille, a practical guide to the origin, development and performance of this form,* how suitable he thought the Drummond pieces might be for dancing. He replied, "It seems to me that the instrument with its short reverberation time would make it easier to get rhythm into the melody line, an essential requirement for our dances." The guitar accompaniment fills out the melody by providing bass and harmony. From personal experience the projection of the machete is surprising for such a small instrument and rooms in private houses would have provided ideal venues for the machete and the guitar.

One visitor, Reverend Chas Thomas (1860), regretted that he was unable to join in with the dancing as he was unfamiliar with the dance steps of Madeiran society. His party had attended an event in which "very sweet music" was provided by a machete. This was followed by a dance, but being unfamiliar "with the Terpsichore of Madeira" (Thomas, 1860, 470) the foreigners were unable to join in. The reference by Thomas to the "Terpsichore of Madeira" suggests there was a unique set of dance steps known to Madeiran society. Further evidence of this is found in the *Fashionable Madeira Cotillions for the Piano Forte* composed by Ricardo Porphyrio da Fonseca and published in New York in 1830. Dance steps were included below the notation thus providing an insight into the "Terpsichore of Madeira".

Thomas made a point of saying the music

for the dance was provided by a "pianoforte of very *unpiano* sound", (Thomas, 1860, 470) thus highlighting the difficulty in finding a venue with a suitable instrument. Fanny Burney, writing in 1839, noted that "the higher classes very generally perform upon the pianoforte, but the enormous duties levied upon that instrument if of foreign manufacture prevents their ever having any save an indifferent instrument". (Burney, 1926, 292) Elizabeth Phelps was frequently frustrated by the lack of a piano. In 1851 she wrote to her husband telling him that the piano she had hired had to be returned at the end of the month. She hoped he would return from England with "one of some kind in your hand". (Forrest et al, 2016, 112-13) But despite his trade and shipping connections she was not particularly hopeful. Meanwhile, machetes and guitars are known to have been made locally and were easily purchased. The principal maker of stringed instruments in Funchal in the mid-nineteenth century being Octavianno João Nunes who made both guitars and machetes.

13. Serenades of Guitars

The prominence of the guitar is noted by numerous early writers. In 1812 Pitta observed that "No night passes at Funchal, or in the country, without serenades of guitars." (Pitta, 1812, 88) Writing in 1839 John Driver attended dances which featured musical interludes of *Senhoras* singing and accompanying themselves on the guitar. "Every lady who plays this instrument (and there are few here who do not), at a party like this brings her own, so that, when called upon, she may be ready to show off to the best advantage." (Driver, 1838, 9) Driver even heard the legendary 'Beautiful Nun of Madeira' play upon the guitar when visiting her at the Santa Clara convent. She sang "several songs with great taste, accompanying herself on the guitar." (Driver, 1838, 16) If every lady owned a guitar as Driver suggests this would constitute a small but active market. While accounts of the guitar by English speaking writers predate those of the machete, this may be misleading as English speakers may have simply used the word 'guitar' generically to include guitars of various sizes. The research of Morais found that machetes were included in the *Regimento* para o *ofício* de *violeiros* (Regulation for the profession of guitar-makers) of Guimarães of 1719.

None of the early Anglophone writers specified the sizes of guitars in use and descriptions, such as Combe's, were often vague. "The peasants of this island, almost without exception, play on the guitar, or some stringed instrument of a similar construction." (Combe, 1821, 77) Combe's illustrations are cartoon like and not particularly helpful. The illustration "Country Musicians" shows two guitars and a violin but the instruments are all the same size and seem to be an impression of what Combe encountered rather than a reliable representation of the instruments in use. His rather vague "some stringed instrument of a similar construction" may imply a local variation of the guitar and something he, as a foreigner was unfamiliar with. The earliest known surviving machete, which is owned by Norberto Gomez, Madeira, is dated 1817. This would indicate that machetes were in use at this time but foreign writers may simply have referred to them as 'guitars'.

14. Conclusions

As our understanding of the Madeiran machete increases so does its historical significance, not simply as one of the forerunners of the ukulele but as an instrument which featured in concerts both in Madeira and England in the nineteenth century. Further research may also reveal the machete being played in other European countries. Candido Drummond, in composing and performing popular European ballroom dances on the machete, combined fashion and tradition. His student, Clara Oakley, brought the machete and its music to England. During the twentieth century the machete was eclipsed by the ukulele, but the discovery of the Drummond manuscript has rekindled interest in the machete. It is my hope that introducing the machete and its historic repertoire to contemporary British audiences through my own performances (live and online), recordings, lectures, blog posts and presentations is helping to raise awareness of this unique instrument, its repertoire and the historic ties between Britain and Madeira.

My first visit to Madeira was in 2017 when I went to collect a machete made to traditional standards by master luthier Carlos Jorge Pereira Rodrigues of Funchal. Rodrigues' workshop is situated in the Rua da Carreira, Funchal, the very same road I had read about in Ellen M.Taylor's guidebook of 1882 where machetes were "well made" by Rufino Telles. For over a hundred and forty years Madeiran luthiers have been making machetes for British visitors. Visiting Madeira was like stepping back in time but, as I soon learned, the island was both timeless and modern. The same "lofty mountains" and "fruitful vallies [valleys]" seen by Pitta in 1812 were now criss-crossed by a lattice of raised modern motorways. As our plane commenced its descent the mountains loomed darkly above us while outside the port window, for several breathtaking minutes, the sparkling blue ocean suddenly seemed less inviting as it appeared for all the world as if we were about to land on the water. We did. The runway of the Cristiano Ronaldo International Airport is built on land reclaimed from the ocean. At just thirty-four miles long and fourteen miles wide Madeira, like its national instrument the machete, is small. But as Robert White had appreciated small things are often full of surprises.

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