

Simon Courtauld
FOOTPRINTS IN SPAIN
British lives in a foreign land
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In tracing connections between Spain and Britain, Simon Courtauld is particularly interested in the Peninsular War, the Spanish Civil War and bullfighting. In Gibraltar, one of the eleven cities on which he focuses, there was neither room nor appetite for bullfighting, but for 126 years from 1813, he explains, fox-hunting thrived from the base of this martial fastness, as an English initiative dependent on the goodwill of neighbouring Andalusian landowners. The Calpe Hunt added "Royal" to its title in 1906, in recognition of the joint patronage of the kings of England and Spain. Surviving the Civil War, the hunt foundered on uneasy Anglo-Spanish relations during the Second World War.

An even more unlikely episode that he recounts concerns the afterlife of the Carlist General Ramón Cabrera, the "Tiger of the Maestrazgo", blamed for atrocities in the 1830s. After fleeing the country, he married an English heiress and they settled down at genteel Virginia Water in Surrey. Their castellated house is now the clubhouse of Wentworth golf club and their tomb in the churchyard of Christ Church nearby is Grade II listed.

Simon Courtauld knows Spain well. It was he who discovered in 1997 that Laurie Lee never did fight at the Battle of Teruel in the Civil War, as he had described in *A Moment of War* (1991), and here Courtauld explains something of the background. In Toledo, the Civil War brought out the courage of the poet Roy Campbell, saving from the Republicans

manuscripts connected with St John of the Cross. In Malaga, the Civil War accentuated the foolhardiness of the zoologist Sir Peter Chalmers-Mitchell, who behaved as far as he could as though nothing had changed, until Nationalist soldiers arrived one morning in 1937 and arrested him and Arthur Koestler, who had been staying with him. Sir Peter was lucky enough to be taken off by the British destroyer HMS *Basilisk*; Koestler survived to tell of his more distressing experiences.

Courtauld rightly praises the travel book *A Stranger in Spain* (1955) by H. V. Morton, and he shares something of the easygoing, readable mixture of reportage and historical highlights that Morton favoured. It is the sort of book to take up on one of the long, slow journeys on the narrow-gauge railways of northern Spain that the author recommends.

CHRISTOPHER HOWSE