

History of Fernão Ferro



The origins of this place are not precisely known. It's up to popular imagination to come up with something real. Thus, based on legend, it is said that the current parish of Fernão Ferro originated from the name of Fernão Peres, brother of D. Paio Peres Correia, feudal lord, Master of the Order of São Tiago, originating in the year 1161 when thirteen horses, with the aim of defending the pilgrims who were going to venerate the tomb of Sant'Iago in Compostela, decided to organize and set up, with the Leonese brotherhood of Santo Elói, an ecclesiastical and military Association.

The "Babilon", the name by which Fernão (Ferro) Peres may have been known, was attributed at the time to the crusaders who, during the reign of King Sancho II, set out across the land of Babylon to defend and guard the tomb of Christ.

It is known that at the time of the Civil War in which King Sancho II and his brother (the future Afonso III) clashed, this Ferdinand, disgraced, sought refuge in this place to protect himself from the anarchy. Here, Fernão Peres collected tribute from all the traveler's who came to and from Sesimbra, on the old road that served as a link to Almada and where the well-known "Casas das Conchas" is located.

Fernão Peres, like his brother D. Paio Peres, was considered a cruel and corpulent man.

The Cross of Christ, inlaid in the crusaders' armadas, symbolised the hilt of the sword, the weapon that always accompanied them and which at the time was called Ferro. The activity of shoeing animals may also have had an influence on how Fernão Peres was treated and given the name Fernão Ferro. For all these reasons, combined with his cruelty and corpulence, the place began to be known as "Fernann Ferro's".

The first reference to Fernão Ferro as a place is recorded in a document in the Torre do Tombo, which states the following: "On January 10, 1501, the Sesmeiros and Sesimbra (Alcaide-Mor and Almoxarife) in the Castle, gave a Letter of Sesmaria in favor of Braz Teixeira, knight of the House of El-Rei Nosso Senhor D. Manuel I, the land where Fernão Ferro is called, with its fountains and the ruins of a house which from its appearance seems to be from other times, to be used for vineyards, farmland and orchards".

In 1547, the year of his death, João Teixeira, son of Braz Teixeira, left the Quinta de Fernão Ferro in his will to the Jerónimos friars of the Monastery of Belém. In 1548, at the request of the Jerónimos friars, King João III gave them a letter authorising them to take possession of the Farm.

With the extinction of the Religious Orders in 1834, the pine forests of Palmeira and Casal de Fernão Ferro were sold at public auction and acquired by Gabriel Borges Marques Rocha, who had rented them out to grow tobacco.

Later that year, with the liquidation of the "Tobacco Contract", the pine forests, farmland and houses were acquired by Abraão Wheelhouse, whose daughter Georgina inherited them as a dowry from her marriage to José Joaquim de Almeida Lima in 1849.

The designation of Fernão Ferro as a place is old, but its settlement is recent. It was around 1902 when families started settling there from other places such as Brejos da Moita, Barra Cheia and Penalva. The “Amaros” family was the first to settle, followed by the “Valentes”, “Mirandas”, “Sacoutos”, “Padre Nossos”, “Gomes”, “Nogueiras”, “Tostão”, among others.

When they settled there were only valleys, scrubland, bruno and stone pines. The plateau was wooded with dense pine forests. Thirty-three families cleared this land and cultivated it. Others worked in the pine forests belonging to the Almeida Lima family to cut down the pine, which was transported to Porto da Raposa - the riverside port of Amora. Here, the pine was shipped on frigates to Lisbon and used as fuel in the capital's furnaces.

Vineyards were planted in Fernão Ferro. They produced good red wine from the Piriquita grape and white wine from the Molina grape. The vineyards, which were so abundant, were lost to phylloxera.

The site of the “Casa das Conchas”, owned by António Xavier de Lima, is where the old road between Sesimbra and Almada passes. It is known that in 1900 it was inhabited by a pine forest guard. On the first floor there was an abegoria, a place where livestock or agricultural implements were kept. On this floor, there is a round window facing south, an oven for baking bread and a cattle shed. José Caetano Garcês was the last tenant of this house.

The dwellings of the first inhabitants were of elongated construction and first floor with rare openings in the adobe and rammed earth walls, closed volumes and attached to the ground. The interior was compartmentalised by wooden partitions, adding successive annexes and the oven which, with its wide chimneys, created a play of volumes that contrasted with the whitewash. The floors of the houses were dirt, but every week they were watered to dissolve the clay, making them smooth and colourful.

In 1920, the Fernão Ferro fountain was repaired. Despite warnings that the water was unfit for consumption, passers-by used it. Around 1944, the Almeida Lima family, who owned the land, took legal action to evict the tenant farmers who had been clearing the land for decades and transforming it into farmland, building houses and raising families.

Através da publicação do Decreto Lei n.º 39917 de 20 de novembro de 1954, o Governo expropriou os terrenos, entregando-os ao colonos, com mediação da Junta de Colonização Interna, para neles continuarem a atividade hortícola ao preço de 1\$000 por square meter. This legal action took place over 10 years with Dr. Luiz Varela Cid, the tenants' defence lawyer, with the collaboration of Rafael Alves Monteiro, a resident of Sesimbra Castle.

In this area, there were several lagoons and ponds, the most important of which were called “Lago de Sesimbra”, “Lagoa do Colorau” and “Lagoa das Marcelas”.

At the beginning of the 1970s, several press reports referred to the proliferation of water hyacinths in the River Tagus - an infesting plant - which had reproduced in the ponds and streams of Fernão Ferro, being dragged into the river.

At the beginning of the century, Fernão Ferro was the route of the stagecoach that transported travellers from Sesimbra to Seixal. The route was operated by João Maria dos Anjos, and in Fernão Ferro there was a moulting of the animals that pulled the stagecoach.

At the beginning of this century, there were still wolves in the forests of Fernão Ferro, and it was always foolhardy to travel along any of the paths that crossed them, since in addition to the wolves, there were scourges and robbers.

Every year in September, the procession from the Saloia region of Lisbon and the Costa da Caparica passed through Fernão Ferro for the Senhora do Cabo Espichel pilgrimage. They came in hundreds of wagons decorated with reeds and paper decorations and it was customary for them to rest and have lunch by the Fernão Ferro Fountain.

Goodbye Fernão Ferro

Until next year

If it weren't for Senhora do Cabo

No one would come here



In 1960, the Fernão Ferro Primary School “Plano dos Centenários” had twenty pupils, some of whom walked from the Apostiça, Mesquita and Flor da Mata estates.

The construction of the bridge over the Tagus and the industrial development of the South Bank brought a new dynamic to the area. Workers from rural areas, who had to leave due to lack of conditions, sought employment in the new factories and residences or places where they could maintain their links to their origins through agricultural work.

In 1969, authorised by the City Council, which granted a permit, António Xavier de Lima began selling part of his property in lots with relative payment facilities. With the motto “Friend sells to Friend”, this sales system led to a rush for plots in the licensed area, which was then extended to other areas envolventes. As obras que constatavam no Projeto Urbanístico inicial foram executadas, lentamente, até ao ano de 1974.

In 1970, this land developer built a church and a parish center, which was inaugurated by Cardinal Cerejeira. The Jornal de Fernão Ferro was also published for the first time that year, only to be abolished shortly afterwards.

In 1974, Professor Costa Lobo's office drew up a Reconversion Plan for Fernão Ferro and predicted 30,000 inhabitants for the area.

The Residents' Committees emerged and, recognised and supported by the Town Hall, they promoted the installation of public lighting, the installation of various water drainage systems and the construction of Primary School No. 2. Shelters for public transport passengers and other improvements promoted by the Residents' Committees were built on the National Road.

From 1977 to 1981, Fernão Ferro went through a period of emptiness, and in 1978 it was considered a critical area due to the arrival of families and their settling in, which led to an increase in need.

In 1981, a group of residents and property owners, aware of the seriousness of the situation, set up an Association with the support of the other residents, with the responsibility of driving forward the urbanisation process. This Associação Dinamizadora para Urbanização de Fernão Ferro (ADUFF) began to gain credibility with Seixal Municipal Council, which, on July 26 of that year, in a statement to the population, informed them that it would be installing a water network for consumption.

The basic infrastructures are in place and the streets are paved. The future looks different and brighter for the community, in terms of facilities.

We know that Fernão Ferro will be a pleasant place to live. Long gone are the days when tribute was paid for passing through these lands at the behest of Fernão (Ferro) Peres.

In 1993, on May 27, the youngest parish in the Seixal municipality was created.