

Preliminary Note

After spending several years studying the legacy left by the first Barons of the Kingdom and thus publicising their role in the construction of Portugal, and their inseparable bond with the town of Alvito, I decided to dedicate myself to producing this publication during the celebrations of the 550th anniversary of the barony.

It summarises the history of Alvito and short biographies of each of the barons, with the aim of clarifying some of the fundamental aspects of this unique town.

Recall that Alvito was present at decisive moments in Portugal's history, supporting, with its people and resources, the arduous undertakings carried out across the world. The importance of Alvito through the ages, such as, where a prince, son of King João II, was born; where it was compulsory stop for the Crown; where Gil Vicente ¹ once walked and premiered a play; where many ambassadors lived, devoted to establishing peace among peoples through negotiations and treaties. These are facts that must be remembered and are essential to the identity of this territory.

Because I recognise Alvito and its barons as an inspiration for peace, I launch the motto that Alvito should always be governed by harmony, friendship and peace as the highest values in its council. Guided by my father Rui and my brother Jorge, from heights we don't quite know, I dedicate this publication to them with great nostalgia.

I would like to thank the Alvito council for the sympathy and friendship they have shown towards my work, especially the Mayor José Efigénio, Rute Viola and Carla Figueira of the Alvito Tourism Board, as well as the enthusiastic and committed Alvito residents who have been unstinting in this process.

¹ Portuguese playwright and poet who acted in and directed his own plays. Considered the chief dramatist of Portugal, he is often referred to as the "Father of Portuguese drama" and as one of Western literature's greatest playwrights.

I, as the author, ask to all readers who know the whereabouts of portraits, documents, objects, bibliography, or simply stories about this family, to kindly share this information, using the email baraodealvito@gmail.com.

On a final note: I have numbered the barons of Alvito taking into account only those who could rightfully be so, so starting with D. Bernarda Caetana, 9th Baroness, there might not be an exact match with some other bibliographies.

Maria Alexandra Serôdio Lobo da Silveira Forjaz

Welcome to the Alvito Castle: A Journey Through History

Dear visitor,

We invite you to immerse yourself in the rich tapestries of time that surround the noble small town of Alvito, its imposing castle and the illustrious family that has moulded its destiny over the centuries. This summarised publication is designed to enrich your visit by revealing the stories, triumphs and challenges of those who lived here and left behind their indelible mark.

The History of the Alvito region

The Alvito region has a past that dates back to time immemorial. These lands have borne witness to human presence since the Neolithic period, with traces stretching back to the Copper, Bronze and Iron Ages, indicating continuous occupation and the adaptation of communities to the changes of the times. Its strategic location in the Alentejo and the abundance of water made it a coveted and important spot from an early stage.

With the formation of the Kingdom of Portugal, Alvito became part of the new territory when it was conquered by Portuguese forces in 1234. The consolidation of the kingdom and the development of the town were boosted in 1251, when the town was donated to D. Estevão Anes, a figure who actively promoted its repopulation, which was essential for fixing the borders and boosting the local economy. An important date in its administrative autonomy occurred in 1280, with the granting of a charter by the Order of the Holy Trinity, a document that established the rights and duties of its inhabitants. This charter was later confirmed by King Dinis in 1283, a monarch known for his organisational vision and for promoting settlement and agriculture in the kingdom.

The 15th century marked a turning point for Alvito. It was during

this period that King Afonso V, the “African”, recognising the importance of the Lobo’s family and the services rendered to the Crown by João Fernandes da Silveira, granted the latter the title of Baron of Alvito. This decision not only raised the family's status, but also established Alvito as Portugal's first barony, the only one in the country for the next two hundred years, a singular achievement that underlined the town's prominence. Throughout the 15th and 16th centuries, Alvito flourished, consolidating itself as an important political and economic centre in the heart of the Alentejo, testifying to the power and influence of its barons and reflecting the social and economic dynamics of the time.

D. José Lobo da Silveira Quaresma, 16th Baron e 4th Marquis of Alvito (*11 March 1826 – †15 November 1917)



D. José Lobo da Silveira Quaresma, the last Baron of Alvito about whom the text provides detailed information and numerous anecdotes, was born on 11 March 1826. He was born in the parish of Santa Engrácia, Lisbon, in Rua da Cruz de Santa Apolónia, in the Quaresma-Alvito palace, his family's residence. He succeeded his mother in titles and house on 7 June 1858. As a Peer of the Realm, in succession to his grandfather, the 3rd Marquis of Alvito, he took the oath and was sworn in at the respective chamber on the 1st of March 1861. The title of Marquis of Alvito during his lifetime, and those of Count and Baron of Alvito, of interest and estate, were renewed by decree on the 15th of December 1861.

D. José Lobo da Silveira performed important duties at court, being Gentleman of the Chamber to King Luís. He received various honours, such as the Grã Cruz da Ordem de Italia, from Charles III of Spain and of the Rosa do Brazil. He was a Senior Honorary Member of the Royal Household and Chamberlain to King D. Carlos and, later, to King Manuel II. He was also a wealthy landowner in the districts of Lisbon and Beja.

On 2 October 1848, José married Mariana Luísa de Sousa Coutinho, his right-hand cousin and first daughter of the 15th Count of Redondo. Mariana died in Belém, Lisbon, on 24 April 1882. One of José's most repeated anecdotes referred precisely to this marriage: he considered