

Synopsis, in English, by Bridget Reynolds

of

**Historia de Benahavís (HISTORY OF BENAHAVÍS)**

by

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Introduction

I have always been attracted to the village of Benahavís and its municipality. During, my time as doctor in the area, I have had the chance to study its picturesque and historic treasures. I have photographed features that I found personally interesting and as a record of these places that I have travelled to over many years.

Chapter One The naming of the municipality

There are three theories as to the origin of the name Benahavís.

It can be pronounced Benahavís or Ben-havis and is derived from the word Ben, which means son in Arabic, and Avis or Havis, which was the name of the man who controlled the region and lived in the Castle of Montemayor. It was his son who devised the plan to build a series of defensive structures to protect the exit at Las Angosturas and the left flank of the castle. This was the basis for the first population of the area after the construction of the Castle. This development was called El Castillo de/the Castle of Ben Havis.

The second theory is that there is an Arabic word 'habis' but it is not a name. It is more likely that it would be the Arabic word 'habit' which can sound like 'habis' and can be used as a name.

The third theory is that the word Benahavis is derived from Ben Babix, the son of the Abyssinian, as there was a settlement (cadi) in the area.

As to the origin of the name Aidin (Daidin), the deserted village off the Ronda road, in Turkish this means 'light' and this was the name of one of its most important inhabitants.

The three rivers that cross the municipality derive their name from the Arabic word for river, 'guad'.

Guadalmina, the river of the mines, which were nearby.

Guadalmansa, which was originally called Guadalmazza, from 'almazara' or oil press, because in those days there was a very important one in the area of Hinaharros (a homestead/ hamlet).

Guadalaiza, which gets its name from the mother of Boabdil the Younger the sultana Aixa.

## Chapter Two - History

We know that Montemayor Castle was in existence in the 10<sup>th</sup> century as it has been mentioned in many accounts of battles for its possession during the Taifas period between the Edrisis of Malaga and the Hammudites of Algeciras and also between King Edris I of Malaga and King Mohammed Aben of Sevilla. Aben Bokin, a general of Edris, recruited soldiers from Montemayor at the start of operations.

When Edris II was being pursued by his cousin Mohammed he disembarked in Marbella and en route to Ronda he stayed for a short time in Montemayor castle to reinforce his defences. He remained in Ronda until Mohamed died and he could reclaim Malaga.

In 1273 Mohamed ascended the Granada throne and appealed to Abu Yusuf Jacob, of the Berber empire in Morocco, to help control 100 kms. of the coastline by occupying Marbella. Montemayor castle was of great strategic importance. Alfonso XI of Castilla took Algeciras in 1342.

## Chapter Three – The Reconquest

On 11 June 1485, at the Cruz del Humilladero, King Ferdinand received, from Mohamed Abuneza, the keys to Marbella and its surroundings: Benahavis, Daidin, Montemayor Castle, the fortress of Cortes, Oxen (Ojén), Arboto, Almachor, Tramores and the fort of Calalui (Castillo de la Luz), in Sierra Bermeja (Estepona). The first

Catholic mayor was Don Pedro de Villandrando, count of Ribadeo. Most of the Arabs went back to North Africa but some remained in Benahavís and Daidin and ostensibly converted to Christianity but continued their Muslim practices in secret. As a punishment, by royal decree, Juan Alonso Serrano was asked in 1488, to provide 500,000 maravadíes (currency of the period) of which 200,000 would go towards the building of the Marbella fortifications. It was at this time that Benahavís began its 350-year campaign to become separate from Marbella and claim that it should not have to contribute.

By royal decree, jurisdiction of Benahavís and Daidin was given to Juan de Silva, count of Cifuentes, in 1492, for his contribution to the defeat of Granada. From 1495 to 1499 he bought up terrain to increase the boundaries of the area which led to tensions with Marbella. In 1511 three members of the governing body of Marbella, accompanied by several armed men, entered these newly-acquired areas causing much damage in a failed attempt to dislodge the inhabitants, for which they were subsequently jailed.

In 1521 Benahavís and Daidin were given a licence for 6 crossbows each to deal with the animals that were causing serious damage to the vineyards and crops.

In 1532, the lands of Benahavis and Daidin were sold by the son of the Count of Cifuentes to Francisco de Villegas for the sum of 250,000 maravedís (the equivalent of €4000). This included the 15 haciendas in Tramores, 5 in Almachar, near Daidin, a site for a 'Venta' (roadside inn) and various properties in the Marbella, Estepona, Casares, Montemayor areas. Carlos de Villegas continued to purchase land in the adjoining areas until, in 1544, a Royal decree by Carlos V prohibited any further purchases by him or anyone associated with him.

In 1565 Marbella complained that Benahavís was not complying with the request to hand-over two Arabs apprehended below Montemayor.

1566 representatives from Marbella made another visit to Benahavís to strengthen the boundary cairns and destroy the gallows which were on top of the church.

## Chapter Four – The rebellion of the Spanish Muslims (moriscos)

During the reign of Philip II the 'moriscos' in the Alpujarras elected Aben Humeya as king. The first insurrection in this area was in Istán in 1568, and there were subsequent attempts in Marbella which were crushed by 4000 soldiers from Ronda. There were ongoing uprisings in Benahavís, Ojén and Istán which were finally suppressed by the Duke of Arcos and the Spanish Muslims were expelled in 1570.

## Chapter Five – La Carta Puebla de Benahavis

Following the banishment of the Muslim inhabitants and the abandonment of Benahavís their property was confiscated. 31 May 1572 was of crucial importance in the history of Benahavís when King Philip II gave the municipality its autonomy and independence from Marbella.

Under the guidelines and rules for the re-population of towns in the Granada realm, Fonseca was given the responsibility of re-distributing the vineyards and the land within the Benahavís boundaries, including Tramosres, that did not belong to Carlos de Villega and Luisa Guzmán. The land was given to 35 individuals including the priest and sexton.

Each individual owner was required to pay one 'real' for each house (a 'piece of eight'/Spanish dollar was the equivalent to eight silver reales), a third of all mulberry (morales) and olive harvests and 1/10<sup>th</sup> of any other harvests, in taxes, to the monarchy. It was also required that a certain 1/10<sup>th</sup> of some harvests be divided between Benahavís and Marbella.

For the next 150 years the situation remained the same until, in 1667, there was a revision of boundaries between Marbella and Benahavís.

## Chapter Six – Boundary judgements

In the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century there were three boundary decisions which resulted in Benahavís becoming a larger municipality than that of Marbella.

The first case was brought on 16<sup>th</sup> January 1756, by the people of Benahavís, against the mayor of Marbella who was preventing them from planting vines and grazing cattle on large areas of land. It took a century for this issue to be resolved (due, in part, to the fact that the people of Benahavis would not let those, commissioned by Granada, enter the village).

The final adjudication, in 1787, by Sr. Domenech deemed that the boundary surrounding Benahavís be 14 leagues which gave the municipality a significant increase in land, to the detriment of Marbella. Boundary markers were placed. A delegate from Marbella complained about the first one in La Atalayuela. The total amount of land within the Benahavis boundaries is 154 square kilometres, consisting of some vines, low hills, cork plantations, hillsides and rocky outcrops. This included the pine-clad hills of Carnicerías, most of mount Fuensequilla, (las alcarrías de) Montemayor, (los pagos de) Daidín, which included that of El Naranjo, Guadalminar or Pimpollar, Colmenar, Fuensequilla, the edge of Daidín hill which was also called La Fontanilla and (por pagos de) Tramores, the Berdiales, Majada del Moral, Guadalminar and La Corumbela. This left the Marbella municipality with 12 leagues of land. \* p 43

Following the abolition of (juridicciones señoriales) by King Charles IV. The supportive role of the Count of Luque was removed. From that point the village went into decline until the mayor reported to Granada that, on 28<sup>th</sup> October 1801, the population consisted of 20 poor inhabitants, none of whom had any children.

## **Chapter VII** - The Napoleonic invasion

As Marbella was occupied on 8 December 1810 the 'serranos'/rebels took refuge in Montemayor castle and carried out incursions at night to interrupt communications and troop movements.

In 1811 Marshall Soult divided the province into 5 districts: Málaga, Vélez-Málaga, Antequera, Osuna and Marbella.

The road from Marbella to Osuna went through Ronda and passed through Benahavís land. The French troops were attacked by locals from Alcuzeuz. This property got its hispano-arabic name from the wheat product made there. It was made of little balls of flour paste

and honey which were steamed. The little balls were put into an earthenware container that had holes in it so that the steam from a larger container could enter the earthenware one that was suspended above it. Variations of the 'alkuzkuz'/cous cous included adding fresh butter, sugar, raisins etc.

In the same year 1811, with the help of the locals in the Ronda mountains, including some from Benahavís, four pieces of artillery, provided by the Governor of Cadiz, were transported, in a clandestine operation, from a boat in Rio Verde, to the castles of Gaucin and Casares.

On 1<sup>st</sup> April 1812 General Ballesteros came from the west and occupied Benahavís and sent 2,000 infantrymen to Istán, a cavalry regiment to Rio Verde and occupied Monda the next day. By 25<sup>th</sup> August 1812 the French forces were driven out of Marbella.

#### Chapter VIII - Events of the modern era

In 1848, to the right of Rio Verde there were two iron foundries. One was owned by Heredia and Co. and the other by Juan Ejiro and Co., both of Malaga. The first, called Ferrería de la Concepción, had 3 tall furnaces. The other, called El Angel also had three tall furnaces.

These ironworks consumed all the trees on the Sierra Blanca and the Sierra de Marbella. One hundred and sixty years ago the mountainside was covered in oak woodlands which produced a significant income for Marbella.

When they had exhausted the supplies in that area they began on the woodland of Benahavis although, fortunately, it didn't suffer to the same extent as Marbella.

These tall furnaces, the first in Spain, were installed by Manuel Heredia, great-grandfather of Jaime Parladé, who acquired the Dehesa of Alcuzcuz, Bornoque in Istán, Sierra Blanca and Las Chapas of Marbella, El Angel and La Concepción. Alcuzcuz was inherited by Maria Heredia y Livermore (Countess of Aguiar), grandmother of Jaime Parladé

In 1874 San Pedro de Alcántara was established by General Concha who created irrigation channels from the Guadalmina river.

In 1875 the title of Count of Benahavís was granted by King Alfonso XII to Ricardo Heredia y Livermoore Martínez y Salas, a member of the Legislative Council. Subsequently, Alcuñuz was inherited by Jaime Parladé Gross.

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This title passed on to Ricardo Heredia Loring and on his death, in 1909, to Ricardo Heredia y Guilhou Loring y Geourgault to whom I have dedicated this work.

Following the death of María Heredia y Livermoore Jaime Parladé Heredia inherited Alcuñuz and this property is currently owned by Jaime Parladé Gross.

In 1887 a cholera epidemic caused a significant number of deaths in Benahavís. Many bodies were buried in the countryside as the cemetery was not big enough. The neighbourhood, led by the Town Hall, made a vow to raise the image of the Holy Virgin in a procession once the epidemic was controlled and since that date of 15<sup>th</sup> August, the day of the Assumption of the Virgin, so it has continued and this is followed by a feria, which had originally been on 7<sup>th</sup> October.

## Chapter IX - 'The War of Liberation'

At the beginning of 1937 the national front formed an arc from the Arroyo V/Baqueros, a few kilometres west of Estepona, passing through the Sierra Bermeja in front of Ronda, continuing through Archidona and Antequera, in front of Loja and finishing to the south of Orgiva in the province of Granada. This left the position of those in control of Málaga unsustainable.

General Francisco Borbón y de la Torre, duke of Sevilla, planned the advance of two columns: Colonel Coco was ordered to follow the Cádiz-Málaga road and the other column, under the command of commander La Herran, was to protect the left flank of the coastal

troops by occupying Manilva, Casares, the rest of the Sierra Bermeja and Benahavís.

The right flank of the operation consisted of several naval vessels, in one of which was the Lieutenant General Gonzalo Queipo de Llano, chief of the southern army, and whose cannons bombarded the columns of fleeing 'rojos'.

Benahavís was 'liberated' on the same day as Malaga on the 8<sup>th</sup> February 1937 when some Guardia Civil forces entered the village without meeting resistance.

### Soneto a Benahavís

Enclavado en la bella serranía,  
Como blanca paloma en su ladera,  
Se encuentra Benahavís, villa señera,  
Pasando el tiempo en grata lozanía.

Paisajes de ensueño haya por sus riscos  
Salpicados de torres almenadas,  
Que nos cuentan historias olvidadas  
De cadíes, harenes y moriscos.

Fernando el Rey tomó su fortaleza  
Y con Daidín entrega al capitán  
Don Juan de Silva, conde de Cifuentes.

Dormido con modorra de grandeza,  
Su historia guarda en misterioso afán  
El escrutar curioso de las gentes.

EL AUTOR.

### **HISTORIC RUINS**

## Montemayor Castle – Hins Mont Mayur

It has been recorded that rubies were found nearby.

Follow a goat track, at the entrance to the village, on the left called 'Camino de la Coja'. After a long walk and steep climb to the castle one has a view of the coast for more than 100 Kms of the Spanish coast, the North African coast and the distant hills to the north. There are substantial remains of the strongly-built stone walls and a well with a big funnel leading to a cistern. One can also see the Queen's tower where there are the remains of some rooms. Finally, there is the entrance to a subterranean passageway which apparently leads to the ruins of La Bóveda /vaults of San Pedro de Alcántara through which the Arabs transported reinforcements, in case of attacks from the sea. It is currently too delapidated to explore. This route was said to be confirmed by the caretaker of Alcuycuz, Fernando Lara, who put a cat through the entrance at La Bóveda and it reappeared at Montemayor castle. There have been many tales of hidden treasures but none have been found to date.

Other remaining Arab ruins are the Torre de la Leonera which was one of the first fortifications of Benahavís as it was at the main access to the basin of the Guadalmina.

One can see, on the right side of the Benahavís road, very close to the village, remains of the walls that surrounded this defensive bastion whose main fortress was the Torre de la Leonera.

Beside the house of Tramores are the remains of a strong fort built during the Arab period.

Francisco Guerrero Mena, who lived there at the time of writing, states that his grandparents, Catalina Ruiz and Alonso Mena, lived in the Tramores tower. One day Catalina saw one of her chickens emerge from a cavity in the tower where her husband later discovered an earthenware jar full of gold coins.

On the eastern side of Benahavís there is a series of fortifications on the left side of the road from San Pedro de Alcántara to Ronda.

These fortifications are:

The Campanillas tower from which a tunnel communicated with the Fuente del Moro which suggests that the inhabitants of the tower sourced their water from there.

The Tarín Tower, a cubic shape, is below Alcuzcuz.

Esteríl tower, which is much more modern and whose name is formed from the old smallholdings, in La Colonia de San Pedro de Alcántara named, La Torre and Esteríl.

Daidín, of which only the remains of the main bastion can be seen, was strategically positioned between two picturesque slopes at the bottom of which flows the River Guadaiza.

## **Geographical Appendix**

See the attached map of the Benahavís municipality of 154 square kilometres situated at 36 degrees north latitude and 4 degrees longitude west of the Greenwich meridian. It borders to the north with Faraján, Pujerra and Igualeja; to the east with Istán; to the south with Marbella and Estepona and to the west with Estepona.

### Chapter one - Position

It is in the southern part of the Ronda mountain range (Serranía) which descends 2000 metres towards the sea.

In the census of 1950 there were 943 inhabitants; the equivalent of 6 inhabitants per square kilometre. This contrasted with Marbella which consisted of 110 square kilometres and 10,127 inhabitants making a density of 92 inhabitants per square kilometre.

### Chapter two - Roads and landscape

Recently, the road connecting the town with the main highway between Cádiz and Málaga was completed; only 9 kilometres separated the town from the main road but it seemed much longer. It is a very picturesque route with a great variety of vegetation. It mainly follows the river Guadalmina with rich cultivation on either side of the road in the Estepona section of the road. On entering the Benahavís area, the road begins to rise at the beginning of the

Sierra. From here the Guadalmina canyon begins, being up to 60 metres deep in places. During the pliocene age a rift was created through which the river flows and is called Las Angosturas (the narrowings). It is not until one is about 100 metres from the village that the houses are visible.

From the north to the south of the municipality runs the road from San Pedro de Alcántara to Ronda, a third-grade road stretching 56 kilometres of great strategic and economic importance for the transport of mainly carob, cork, marble and esparto products.

Other roads are mainly paths and goat tracks but one that is worth mentioning is the road to Ronda, via the hamlet of El Charcón, the Venta (roadside inn) de Matías (or known by some as Venta La Tía) and through Pujerra. There is also an old road to Estepona from the Montemayor hill, crossing hillsides and the river Guadalmana.

Lastly, the road to Igualeja which starts, from the Marbella to Ronda road, that runs along the border of Istán and Benahavis for 10 kms, at a point known as El Moliche. From there it heads northeast, crossing the river Guadaiza and passing the ruins of Daidín (Aidin) and later crossing the San Pedro-Ronda road towards Igualeja.

### Chapter III – The soil and water

The Benahavís area is enclosed by the Serranía de Ronda and consequently 95% of the land is broken and mountainous with only 5% being flat. Some of these hills and mountains are divided by springs, streams and valleys which feed the rivers of the area.

According to Domingo de Orueta, who has studied the Serranía de Ronda in depth, this area is one of the most complex on the Iberian Peninsula in that elements from all eras can be found: 'peridótica' or granite which is an intrusive rock formed by the cooling of molten magma. This principally consists of olivine, (peridot) a magnesium iron silicate, as well as pyroxines and amphiboles. As this type of rock does not have clear elements, such as quartz and feldspar, the rock is very dark. This type of rock can be found in the Sierra Palmitera, the highest peak of which is 1,472 metres, and on the edges of Las Angosturas with high pyramid-like formations.

Granite and marble are also abundant in the riverbed of the Guadalmina river. In Las Angosturas there is an area in this river called 'La Charca de los Novios/Las Mozas' which is a deep hole in the marble of the riverbed, where the water becomes a whirlpool. The story is that a young couple went to swim there, with the girl going in first and when her fiancé saw her getting into trouble went in to save her but both of them drowned.

According to the geographer José Macpherson the average height of the area is between 600 and 700 metres.

Three rivers cross this municipality which are of great economic importance. Especially the river Guadalmina from which run a series of waterways providing important irrigation systems for the hamlet of Cortes, and the districts of San Pedro de Alcántara and Marbella. These irrigation channels do not benefit the Benahavís area.

The river Guadalmina runs for 28 kilometres, from its source in Igualeja, crossing the Serranía de Ronda collecting water from the streams of Las Cabras, Oscuro, de Almageres, Juan de Miná and the river Llano de la Leche and on, its right, the stream Cerro Grande. The river borders the eastern side of the town of Benahavís and in the past was of strategic defensive importance. Near the town there are small waterfalls and springs and several flour mills which use the river flow. On leaving the municipality it serves as the border between Marbella and Estepona as it flows into the Mediterranean.

The river Guadalmanza runs along the borders of Pujerra and Fraján from north to south on the western side of Benahavís. The river Hinahorros flows into this, passing through the ruins of the mill of the same name and eventually flows into the Mediterranean in Estepona

The river Guadaiza flows for 22 kms from Igualeja, fed by the springs of Alberguillos and Hornillos, running alongside the Ronda-San Pedro de Alcántara road, passing in front of the ruins of Daidín, and on through the Marbella municipality to the sea.

#### Chapter IV - The vegetation

This is mainly of hillside shrubs and trees. There is a small area on the southern side that is suitable for cereal and vines and a tropical zone where some palms grow.

## Chapter V - Mining

There are different mines in the municipality of Benahavís but most of them are unexploited due to difficulties of access.

The most important one that is in operation is the marble quarry on Alcuzcuz

Mármoles de Benahavís S.A. has extracted large blocks of sacaroid limestone for the construction industry.

There are also: three granite mines called El Siete, Santa Rosa and María del Carmen none of which are in operation currently, in spite of the high quality of the mineral. It is one of the many riches that this town has but does not exploit.

There is also a talc mine called Lucero which used to send the mineral to Marbella where it was ground but due to high transport costs is not operational. There is also an asbestos mine and two of mica called Asfaltex and Mercedes which are closed. There is also an iron-ore mine called Teresa which is not developed due to poor accessibility and weak seams.

## Chapter VI - Population and homesteads/hamlets.

According to the census of 1950, Benahavís consisted of 147 buildings with the following distribution:

	Buildings	Inhanitants
Benahavis	48	242
Briján (hamlet 3 ½ Kms.)	8	46
Charcón (5 kms.)	13	51
Hinaharros (4 kms.)	10	54
Naranjos (3 ½ kms.)	8	34
Retamar (3 ½ kms.)	5	18
Other places	55	518
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>147</b>	<b>96</b>

## Chapter VII - The Town

The church has recently been rebuilt, thanks to the bishop of Málaga.

Next to the church is a school building.

In the square is the Town Hall and the Guardia Civil headquarters. In a corner of Plaza Castillo, off the square, is a building in ruins which the locals refer to as The Palace. There remains strong evidence of its Arabic construction. In one of the rooms there is a large set of iron stocks for placing 7 men by their feet and one head-lock which must have been for the Arabs' prisoners in the dungeons.

Public services: Recently, thanks to the civil governor of Málaga Sr. d. Antonio Garcia Rodriguez Acosta, Benahavís welcomed a telephone service, after 50 years of petitioning.

Thanks to this, Benahavís is no longer as isolated as it had been over centuries. Previously, although Marbella is only 21 kms. away, the return journey took 5 hours, due to the tortuous tracks which, at times, were impassable. Due to the facility of the phone line a girl, suffering from diphtheria, was saved by the timely administration of serum.

The water supply is assured by the provision of two fountains.

My greatest wish is that this book is widely read so that these places become better known and visitors can appreciate the immense natural and historic treasures that surround this place.

Finally, I would like to thank the Benahavís Town Hall, led by my good friend Cristóbal Mena, who work tirelessly for their municipality to have the recognition it deserves. Before him there were other illustrious leaders who fought for the development of these treasures which would make this town one of the richest in the province of Málaga.

If this modest work were to make some contribution towards this end it would make me extremely happy.

Marbella, February 1960