

Chilean–British friendship

By **JACQUES ARNOLD**

SPECIAL ADVISOR FOR LATIN AMERICA, FIRST



JACQUES ARNOLD was Midland Bank's Deputy Representative in Brazil, establishing their Representative Office in São Paulo in 1976. He was later the Thomas Cook Regional Director for Latin America, establishing operations throughout the continent. He became MP for Gravesham in 1987, as well as Secretary of the British Latin American Parliamentary Group. He was an international parliamentary observer at the Chilean Constitutional Referendum in 1989, and led a British Parliamentary Delegation to Chile following the restoration of democracy. Since leaving parliament in 1997, he has been Advisor to a range of British companies in their Latin American activities.

The flying visit of Sebastián Piñera to London is the latest milestone in two centuries of close and friendly relations between Britain and Chile.

Nearly 200 years ago, Britons fought alongside Chileans in their war for independence from Spain. The radical MP for Westminster, Lord Cochrane, a former naval officer whose exploits inspired C.S. Forrester's *Hornblower* and Captain Maryatt's novels, signed up and travelled to Chile with his wife Kate, arriving in 1818, to become a Chilean citizen and Vice Admiral, and Commander-in-Chief of the Chilean Navy.

He worked for the Supreme Director of Chile, General Bernardo O'Higgins, the son of an Irishman who became the Spanish Viceroy of Peru, who had himself been educated in England. Cochrane's time leading the nascent Chilean Navy has reverberated down the years of Chilean History. Cochrane conducted the daring naval expedition against Valdivia, the last Spanish redoubt in Chile, 500 miles south of Valparaíso, overcoming powerful forces and capturing the town along with its fortifications and considerable military supplies. His greatest exploit was the cutting-out of the Spanish Pacific Fleet's flagship, the 'Esmeralda' from beneath the guns of the fortress of

Callao, which effectively gave Chile supremacy over the Pacific coast of the continent. He later rode in triumph with General San Martín into a liberated Lima.

In 1823, he left Chile to provide similar service to the Brazilians in their struggle for independence. Not content, he later fought in Greece for their independence from the Turks. Cochrane was not alone, for many Britons, demobbed from the British forces after the final victory at Waterloo, served in the Chilean forces. Major William Miller, a former artillery officer from the Peninsular War, became Commandant of Marines. Robert Forster, from Bamburgh in Northumberland, Martin Guise and John Spry were also distinguished former Royal Navy officers who became Captains in the Chilean Navy.

Those heady days continue to inspire the Chilean Navy. Even before Cochrane's arrival in Chile, an Irishman and former Royal Navy officer, Raymond Morris, serving in San Martín's army, captured the Spanish vessel 'Aguila' and was appointed her Captain in the first vessel of the Chilean Navy. In 1818, Chile purchased the frigate HMS Windham, which was renamed the 'Lautaro'. She subsequently purchased her first ship of the line, HMS Cumberland, which became the 'San Martín'. Both these ships served under Commodore Blanco Encalada in the



Hidden treasures
abound in Chile,
along the Andes from
Atacama to Antarctica:
Torres del Paine

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battle of Talcahuano, which first defeated the Spanish navy in Chilean waters.

Over the years, Chile's navy developed. In 1856, they ordered a steam corvette, built in England for their navy, the 'Esmeralda', and another, the 'Chacabuco', followed. In the 1870s, two powerful iron-clads of the latest design were ordered from English yards, the 'Cochrane' and the 'Blanco Encalada', and they took a leading role in the Pacific War. Many Chilean naval officers were trained in England, and Chile's first school ship, the 'Baquedano' was purchased in England. Close cooperation between the two countries continued. Two battleships, ordered from Yarrow's by the Chileans, became surplus to requirement, and were commissioned into the Royal Navy as HMS Triumph and HMS Swiftsure. In 1914, two further battleships, built in Britain for the Chileans, were taken up by the Royal Navy as the battleship HMS Canada, which fought at Jutland, and the aircraft carrier HMS Eagle. Since the Second World War, Chile has acquired four County Class destroyers from the Royal Navy, and four Leander Class frigates, two of which were constructed specifically for the Chilean Navy at Yarrow's on the Clyde. More recently, Chile has purchased four ships from the Royal Navy, a type 22 frigate, now the 'Almirante Williams', and three type 23 frigates, the 'Cochrane', the 'Lynch', and the 'Condell'.

Alongside Britain's contribution to Chile's defences, British companies developed their activities in Chile. British banks financed Chilean developments; the Anglo-South American Bank opened in Chilean cities, and the Bank of London and the River Plate in Santiago and Valparaiso. They later developed into the Bank of London & South America, which worked in Chile until Allende's



Admiral
Lord Cochrane,
Chile's naval
Commander-in-Chief

nationalisations. The banks financed the nitrate, coffee and cocoa industries. HSBC has since appeared on the scene. Railways were developed, notably the Antofagasta & Bolivia Railway. Electric power, gas and telecommunications were major British investments. Chileans of British descent founded the famous local bank, Banco de A. Edwards, and the national newspaper 'El Mercurio'. Despite the ups and downs of Britain's worldwide economic activities, Britain is the fourth largest foreign investor in Chile. Chile is Britain's fourth largest export market in South America, and in turn Britain is the largest market for the Chilean wine trade, and well as being very significant for Chile's exports of minerals, wood products, fruit and vegetables, and even frozen chicken. Other British exports to Chile were football, cricket and tennis!

Academic links with Chile are strong. The Grange School in Santiago, founded in 1928 by a Chilean of British descent, provides a bi-lingual education from kindergarten to secondary, based on British curricula, adapted for local requirements. Other British schools are present. The British Institute in Chile has provided English language teaching, and teacher training, for seventy years, and has now developed into the Chilean-British University of Santiago, inaugurated in 2007 by Prince Edward, Earl of Wessex.

Royal connections with Chile go deep. In 1882, the two sons of the then Prince of Wales, Albert Victor, Duke of Clarence, and George, Duke of York, later King George V, visited Chile during their three-year naval tour in HMS Bacchante. Edward VIII, when Prince of Wales, visited Chile in 1925. The Queen made a State Visit to Chile in 1968, returning a State Visit to Britain by President Frei Montalva in 1965. In 2000, Prince William spent 10 weeks of his gap year on a Raleigh International expedition to Coyhaique in Patagonia, where he assisted with research into the huemul, a rare southern Andean deer, with Chilean and British scientists, carried out reconnaissance of terrain and habitats in the national reserve, and did community work in Tortel, a very remote village in the Chilean fjords. In 2007, the Princess Royal made a long visit to Chile, travelling as far south as Punta Arenas and the Chilean Antarctic Institute, and last year the Prince of Wales, together with the Duchess of Cornwall, made an official visit to the country. Additionally, an almost continuous flow in both directions of Ministers, defence chiefs, academics, scientists and businessmen maintains British-Chilean relationships.

From the desert of Atacama, through the lush country of central Chile, to the fjords and islands of Chilean Patagonia and the Antarctic, Britons have played their part in the development of a beautiful, dynamic and friendly country. The visit this week is yet another highlight of British-Chilean relations and warm affection. We hope to welcome President Piñera again soon, not least for the 2012 Olympics. **F**