

Title: *Guide to Son Real*

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1st edition: 2008

2nd edition: 2023

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Updated 2023 edition:

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DL: PM 366-2008

Guide to **Son Real**



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PRESENTATION

Miquel Mir Gual

Tourism Councillor

Government of the Balearic Islands

A visit to Son Real public estate is tantamount to embarking on a journey in time. This journey takes you from prehistoric times through to our more recent past in a setting conspicuous for its outstanding nature, scenery, ethnology and heritage.

This idyllic space, which can be enjoyed all year round, features rural estate houses, archaeological sites, stretches of seashore, farm and woodland, and even some industrial remains.

In 2002, the sum of all these distinctive features led the Balearic Government to purchase this 395-hectare estate, in the municipality of Santa Margalida, with a view to ensuring their conservation while also allowing for public use of the estate.

Son Real is the perfect place to get to know, experience, and relive our history through pre-Talayotic archaeological remains, medieval rural estate houses that take you back to an island where life mainly revolved around arable and livestock farming prior to the tourist boom, caves, sand and stone quarries that have modified the lay of the land, alignment towers, nature, and the myotragus. The interpretation centre and museum help visitors to understand this past, while the refuge invites you to prolong your stay in order to discover the traces left by humankind over a period of more than 4500 years through walks and enjoyment of the surroundings.

The virtues that set Son Real apart are outlined in the following pages of this re-edited extensive guide promoted by the Institut Balear de la Natura (Ibanat), which

manages the public estate, carries out improvements to it, and promotes research, archaeological studies and the restoration of the ethnological features and heritage that make it such a very special place.

I invite you to read on and to discover the secrets of Son Real, which I have only sketched very briefly. Above all, I invite you to visit and experience Son Real, taking part in the activities that are carried out, living it to the full and going back in time to a place that still manages to conserve and uphold its original essence, even though it is now surrounded by one of Mallorca's most touristic areas.

PROLOGUE

Antoni Mas

Great-grandson of the colliers of Son Real.

Once upon a time, Son Real, formerly known as Robert's house, was not like any other possession. Not because it had thick soil — in fact, most of it was thin — nor because it was farmed more by the peasants in the township and the environs; I would even daresay that it was actually the opposite, because until relatively recently the sea was considered a fount of danger. However, that does not mean that Son Real was not a possession just like all the others, and even that it was not a large possession. It was indeed: it was the largest in the township, with almost two thousand *quarterades* (equaling 17 acres each), or more precisely 1,896 if the estimates from the 19th century were not far off course. They were houses that showed, and still remind us of, both the importance of the farm and the social hierarchy that was imposed there. It was a scaled structure that had the lords of the estate at the top, under them their overseers, and then on the lowest rungs of the social ladder an entire host of permanent wage earners (like menservants) and temporary workers (like the day labourers during the periods of reaping and threshing). And this did not include the tenants, like the peasants who toiled to make a profit by tilling the least fertile lands on the possession, or like those people who went to fell pine trees for woodworking and look for lumber to make ant-hills. There were even colliers, like that family from Mancor which in the harsh post-war years strived — and managed — when they felled the thin trunks to make coal from the pine trees on the possession. But Son Real always had that something special which made it quite different from the Other pos-

sessions. And that was — of this I'm certain — due to the mysterious air it has always had, which came to it from the different winds and swirled around in the tales spun by the old folks. To begin with, Son Real had the sea. A sea that, as I said above, was a source of danger for centuries; not for nothing the oldest houses on the possession had a defense tower. Since the Middle Ages, the men from Santa Margalida were charged with warning about the arrival of pirates, corsairs and enemy ships. They did so until the 19th century, specifically, and among other places, in the cave across from L'Illet des Porros, a prehistoric burial site. However, it was the only one that could give relatively easy and well-shielded protection to the men who aimed to watch out for those ships that entered the bay and sometimes wrought havoc with their incursions into the most modest towns and *possessions*. Later on, during the 19th century, in this place, near the same cave and L'Illet des Porros, there was a barracks that was abandoned, most likely because the danger gradually subsided. It must have been for this very reason, because the fear of the unknown sea had waned as well as the people tended to work more in the Son Real marina. These were men who went to extract stones from the quarries right on the sea, farmers that went to look for seaweed to fertilize their crops or place at the base of trees, plus people who found another use for the sea and the increasingly relative solitude of the site: the smugglers. Back then, towards the end of the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century, contraband —tobacco, mainly— was a supplementary source of income for many families in

Santa Margalida, and also one of the sources of the fortunes that were made in the town. It was said that half of the population engaged in smuggling. Son Real, said the old folks, was full of the dens and hiding places of the smugglers; there were some that were so well-built as the *smugglers cave* that experts do not know whether it was a modified prehistoric cave or a new one dug out by the smugglers. It was even told that the people from Santa Margalida's interest in keeping the Des Quarter or the L'Illet des Porros public roads — the latter being one that starts from the houses on the estate — in good conditions was mainly motivated by the desire to facilitate that activity that had become a major supplement to the economy of the farming families in the town. And, as if that were not enough, Son Real had been the site of strange and extraordinary events, ranging from people who drowned there and were not found for several days to tales that talk about a smoking stone that cracked in the sea. The most extraordinary event, which is much more than an anecdote, is what took place in 1348, when the first victim of the Black Plague on Mallorca — the Alcúdia native Guillemó Brassa — was buried by his neighbours without permission in L'Illet des Porros. The men from Santa Margalida, perhaps warned by the overseer to watch over the cave, soon found out and protested to the governor, who gave the order to exhume the corpse and bury it in Alcúdia. Surely as the result of transporting the corpse, which must have been witnessed by many Alcúdia and Santa Margalida residents, what many people wanted to avoid ended

up happening: the spread of the plague, such a fierce disease that it swept away almost half of the population of both townships. Rubert's house — that was how Son Real was called, in a local twist on the name of one of the first owners, Robert de Bellveí — had unexpectedly become the stage of an outlandish history with a truly sad ending. The depopulation of the town — where the population density never even reached one family per square kilometre! — must have made it an even more desolate spot, until in the second half of the 14th century it acquired a man born in Selva, Real Moja, who possessed it for a relatively short period and who, unwittingly and surely because of the strangeness of his name, ended up lending that large possession his name. But, in addition to all that — which isn't exactly nothing — Son Real was, is and will always be known for the extremely rich archaeological heritage it conceals, and above all else, for the Talayotic necropolises — Es Cementeri des Fenicis or the Phoenician cemetery, as it is called in Santa Margalida — and L'Illet des Porros. Whoever would like to find out about this heritage and learn about Son Real can do so by reading the maps that follow. There they will discover a minute, detailed, painstaking and — equally or more important than the above — understandable and fascinating description written by the person — and I am quite sure of this — who knows and loves Son Real the best, Carlos Garrido. Suffice it to read these maps to be in awe of him. Congratulations, Carlos, and especially thank you for all these years of work.



Aerial view of Son Real estate.

INTRODUCTION

A VISIT TO SON REAL

If travellers from our day could take a look through the window of time into the past they would be astonished to see the ancient landscape in the Bay of Alcúdia. To begin with, much of what today is a tourist zone was wetlands and marshes. The Muro marsh is the last redoubt of a vast area of wetlands that spread along most of the coastline, with flooded areas, reedbeds and scrubland. At the same time, the use of wood as a resource for both construction and fueling fires led to constant deforestation. In prehistoric and Roman times, the forests were probably much sparser than today, and large stretches without tall vegetation could probably have been seen, giving a much more pronounced impression of the plain. The region around the Bay of Alcúdia was, therefore, perfect for hunting, gathering water and sailing. Yet it was poor from the standpoint of agriculture, and not very useful for livestock husbandry. Despite this, this area played a key role in the history of Mallorca. Its accessibility from the sea probably fostered contact with Menorca during

prehistoric times. Semite and Greek sailors also most likely used this bay as a stopover point, even though there is no evidence to prove this claim. In Roman times, Pollentia (Pollença) was a seafaring city because it was easy to reach from the Italian peninsula. This explains its abundance of archaeological remains, as well as the richness of its artistic and ethnologic heritage. Currently, tourism has been concentrated into very specific areas: Alcúdia, the La Platja de Muro, Can Picafort and Son Serra de Marina. Yet there still remain redoubts where time seems to have stood still, like the inland plain located between Can Picafort and Arta, with its vast *possessions* and a landscape that features croplands, brushwood and solitary pathways. Names like Son Real, Son Serra de Marina and Son Marl call up an image of ancient homes, vast hunting grounds and archaeological remains that pay testimony to continuous settlement of the area.

Located virtually in the middle of the arc of the bay, Son Real is an estate that has been settled continuously from the remotest prehistoric times until today. The estate bears remain of the human presence 4,500 years ago, which are superimposed with other remains from the pre Talayotic period (around 4,000 years ago), the Talayot-

ic period (3,000 years ago), the Roman ages (a little over 2,000 years ago), the Islamic settlement, the Middle Ages and today. As a habitat, Son Real has a huge advantage, which is that it is an estate that has been modified very little since the early 20th century. Miraculously, bearing in mind its proximity to the tourist hub of Can Picafort, it has preserved its first-rate ethnologic, landscape and archaeological assets, to such an extent that we can find no other possession with such extensive *capital* on Mallorca. A visit to Son Real provides us with a wealth of information. First of all, it evokes life on a possession as it was lived for centuries on end, when these rural estates were tiny hamlets with a permanent population. Likewise, it also offers a catalogue of fascinating archaeological sites from all ages, with monuments that are unique on all of Mallorca, such as the necropolis on La Punta des Fenicis (a revealing toponym that means Phoenician Point). It also preserves several quarries that illustrate the harshness of this job and that shape a strange landscape full of inclined planes and torturous geometry. Another interesting part is the sand. Here you can see beaches where the sand has been formed by the fragmentation of shells and organic remains. A

little further on, you can see huge fossil dunes which were later transformed into a forest. You can also see the ancient sand quarries that today are abandoned. The forest and scrubland areas of Son Real illustrate the flora and fauna from these ecosystems. And you can visit the Son Bauló stream, another type of natural habitat with its own unique features. All of this can be seen under the care and supervision that comes from this being a public holding; with routes for outings, a refuge and exhibition halls.

Son Real represents the eternal Mallorca, the one that has survived throughout a multitude of historical and social events, not just because of everything you can discover there related to nature but also because of the human factor.

What people love to listen today, even indirectly, is the voice of our ancestors, the footprints of the people that lived in different worlds from ours but that somehow still survive here, who are perceptible and speak to us not just about their times but also about ourselves.

In a world like ours, where everything seems to already have been invented and discovered, there is still one more adventure to embark on: the adventure of the past,

which consists of listening to the legacy of other times and letting it resonate inside us so that, somewhere deep down we can continue to be those ancient humans. Recognizing ourselves in them triggers profound emotions. On Son Real, the architecture of the houses tells us about a culture that has now vanished: the life on a possession, the lost trades, the tools, songs, ways of interacting. A way of life that endured for centuries but that today's tourism and technology left by the wayside about 40 years ago. Today, the people who are aware of this life are quite old, and soon we'll have to find this testimony from places like Son Real, where we can reconstruct the jobs and days on a possession thanks to details like the bench for sitting in the courtyard, the sheep stables, the huts in the middle of the scrubland, the nooks for hunting, the smugglers' caves...

Yet if we go back even further, we can listen to the murmur of our ancestors in the vast prehistoric ruins, funerary monuments that entailed considerable social effort, a true homage to the dead. Walking through these landscapes that still conserve all their telluric and magical properties, it is possible to imagine a funeral procession, the music, the mourners, the offerings and, in the back-



Son Real interpretation centre.

ground, the sea itself, the backdrop of the mountains of Alcúdia and the nearby Cap de Ferrutx.

Son Real is the best example of these sites that seem small when you walk through them quickly, but that take on size, depth and extension as you get to know them better. This is an invitation to an external but also internal journey. It will help you get to know the soul of Mallorca from its ancient past until rural and pre-tourist society.

We have divided this guide into three parts. The first one examines the houses and their environs. The second part takes you on a tour inside the estate, where you can walk around the open pathways. The third one is a tour along the coast and what are unquestionably the most enigmatic and fascinating monuments. On the last stretch of this tour, it connects up with the Es Cremat trail. Finally, the part furthest from the houses is where you can explore Son Bauló stream.

We recommend that you take more than one day to get to know Son Real. Your first visit can be to the possession itself, which has an interpretation center and the Es Figueras archaeological complex. A walk along the L'illot des Porros pathway has you crossing the forest until you reach the sea. For a second day at the estate, you might

want to set out from Son Bauló stream until you reach the tourist hub of Can Picafort, then continue along the coastline and visit the archaeological sites. This would give you a different perspective of the area.

If you only have a little time, the most important thing is to limit yourself to the possession itself, the interpretation centre and the La Punta des Fenicis necropolis, a half-day outing.

In all cases you must follow the signaled pathways. You must be respectful of both the natural environment and the prehistoric monuments.



1. The Houses



Entrance to the Son Real public estate.

The entrance

You will find the entrance to Son Real between kilometer markers 17.6 and 17.7 on the MA-12 motorway running from Can Picafort to Arta. The entrance is on the northern side of a long straight stretch. Two **stone columns**, each topped with a stone sphere, mark the entrance, and from there a road leads you towards the houses of the possession, which can be seen 200 metres away.

Up until 25 years ago, Son Real was the largest rural estate in the township of Santa Margalida. Originally it was more than 1,000 hectares large, but later the contiguous property of Es Ravellar (to the east) was split off. In 1991 the parliament of the Balearic Islands declared the zone a Natural Area of Special Interest due to its natural, ethnological and archaeological assets. In 2002, the government of the Balearic Islands purchased part of the estate, the portion located between the motorway and the sea. The other part still belongs to the old owners. All told, 395 hectares are available for public use, which encompasses the buildings of the possession, the crop lands, the forests and the outlying areas near the stream and coast.

The dry walls

Just as you enter the estate you can see the first elements of interest, namely the two stone columns topped by **spheres** that mark the entrance. This is an architectural element typical in lordly estates that was widely used during the 18th and 19th centuries to mark the entrances to the *possessions*. You will find another similar one later at La Casa Nova. It was common to import urban details like this one to the rural world in order to give the constructions more cachet.

From the entrance road you can also see one of the many samples of **dry stone walls** that characterize the estate. This ancient, laborious technique reached a high degree of complexity on Mallorca. In fact, the Balearic Islands mark one of the high points in the Mediterranean for this use of stone.

Specifically, on the wall to your right you can see the difference between the wall itself, with pieces placed in a somewhat haphazard fashion, and the upper row, which finishes it off in a more orderly fashion. Traditionally, this upper row has several different names: *filada de dalt* (up-





Dry stone wall at the entrance to the estate.

per row), *igualada* (even row), *encadenat* (chained row), *corona* (crown) or *enqueixalat* (teeth), the latter because its appearance is similar to a row of teeth. The upper part is skillfully finished with rows of stones placed in a herringbone pattern.

On the same wall you can also see remains of *botadors* (jumpers), small steps that barely jut out made of flat stones inserted into the wall which were used to jump to the other side, in addition to a rustic staircase at the end. The fact that we are in an archaeologically rich zone is why there is such a considerable number of large stones, which come from the Talayotic settlement. You can even make out a few ancient prehistoric mills, used later for rubble to fill in stone walls. This survival of the large stones that made up the prehistoric constructions will be a constant feature on the dry walls near the houses.

Near the portal leading to this enclosed area you can see on the wall an ancient corner that was eliminated to continue the wall. This is the remains of a wall running perpendicular to the road that you can see in the middle of the plot, probably the first enclosure wall.

In the crop field or seedbed located in front of the houses you can see an irrigation channel. There you can find

the estate's well, which is 30 metres deep and provides both fresh and salt water, depending on the level. A fascinating fact is that when the irrigation channel contained salt water, small prawns were cultivated there which the fishermen came to harvest as bait.

The name of Son Real

The first thing that surprises visitors is the very name of Son Real, which many people erroneously associate with a royal lineage. Historians like Antoni Mas and Antoni Gili Ferrer have studied the real origins of the name. The first historical mentions date from the 14th century, when the zone was known as the Marina d'en Robert (Robert's Marina). Back then we know that there was a house, because in 1356 the owners complained because the neighbours around them let their pigs graze on the land, which was becoming wild. Back then it was a highly depopulated region mainly made up of forests, salt marshes and plenty of game. The name of the estate changed upon the arrival of a certain personage: Real Mòger i des Colombers. He was the descendant of knights who participated

in the conquest of Mallorca with Jaume I and inherited these lands in 1398. The name Real probably drew the attention of the people from Santa Margalida, and as a result the estate came to be known as the Marina d'en Real de Mòger (Real de Mòger's Marina) and then later as Son Real.

After the Catalan conquest of 1229, the entire township of Santa Margalida came to be under the domain of the Count of Empúries. The town of Santa Margalida received this name in memory of the monastery of the same name located on the outskirts of Empúries, in the Alt Empordà region in Girona. The same lands where Son Real currently stands were part of the Barony of the Count of Empúries on Mallorca until the suppression of the feudal lordships in the 19th century.

In the second half of the 15th century the estate appears divided into two farmsteads, which would later be joined as they became the property of this family. We can find testimony of the existence of the houses and the water-mill from as far back as 1566. In the 19th century, ownership shifted to the Morell family, which kept it until they sold the estate to the government of the Balearic Islands.



The ‘possessions’

The word *possession* is equivalent to the Menorcan *lloc*, the Catalan *masia*, the Andalusian *cortijo*, the Basque *caserío* and the Castilian *cigarral*. They are all extensive rural estates with buildings that serve for both housing and production. The term appeared in Mallorca some-time after the 14th century; before that the Arabic-based word *alqueria* (usually translated as farmstead) was used, which in Islamic times denoted a clan-based rural farm. The *possessions* were hubs of agricultural production, heirs to the concept of the Roman *villae*. Like them, they had a pars urbana or residential zone, and another *rustic* area devoted to the farming tasks.

The sites of many of the *possessions* coincide with ancient prehistoric settlements. Not for nothing: they almost always sought the same conditions: a certain elevation, rocky soil so that the foundations were sound, water-rich land, a location that was protected from the wind, and a favorable orientation to the sun. Quite un-

like today, back then the future layout of the buildings was carefully studied before beginning the slow, costly construction process.

The architecture of the *possessions* was originally quite simple. In many cases they were fortified, just as Son Real was at first. It was only after the 17th and 18th centuries that the noble taste for rural estates with signals of prestige such as large courtyards, noble staircases and arcades took root.

The basic structure of a possession consisted of an entrance road, often lined with trees, a portal that was more or less monumental and a stone-covered esplanade or area that set off the facade. The layout of many of these estates was organized around a central courtyard or cloister that could be totally closed off or not, around which both the home of the lords of the estate and the quarters of the overseers and workers were arranged, not to mention the workplaces such as the oil mill, watermill, stables and the like. It was common to find a well opening, as in Son Real, in the middle of the cloister. The large *possessions* almost always had a tall palm tree or nettle-tree that characterized their silhouette.

A possession meant the existence of a social structure organized into ranks. The owners almost always belonged to the urban upper class and only resided at the estate occasionally. In this case, the management was in the hands of an employee of the owners who was called the foreman. It was very common for the owners to rent out the estate in exchange for income, and thus appears the figure of the overseer or tenant, a key personage for the development of the countryside, as he organized the production, administered the estate and sometimes even lent money to the lords, who had a great deal of patrimony but little cash. His wife, the mistress of the house, played a crucial role in estate life because she was in charge of the domestic aspects and was the heart of the social life.

Each possession was equivalent to a tiny hamlet where at times more than 100 people might live. Taking into account the difficulties in travelling, the inhabitants of a rural estate almost never left it. Thus, they formed a highly organized community with the jobs clearly assigned. The *amitgers* were tenant farmers who rented parcels of land inside the estate. The day labourers worked in exchange for a daily wage for a given period of time. If

someone was hired for the entire year they were called *missatges* (menservants) and could be either *parellers* (team handlers who were in charge of the animals that ploughed the land), *porquers* (who tended the swine), shepherds, *oguers* (who cared for the mares), hovers (drovers), *indioters* (turkey tenders) or *figueralers* (who tended to and harvested the fig trees). Children began to do jobs such as tending to the swine or shepherding from a young age. One important figure was the *garrigu-er* (woodsman), who was in charge of keeping watch with a rifle over the entire vast extension of the brush or scrubland to prevent fires and ward off poachers.

The timetables of the work were intense, and the only day of rest was Sunday. Mass was also an occasion for social relations, as were the slaughters or town festivals. It was a harsh life, a fact that is attested to in many popular songs.

Of this entire complex social, cultural and working universe, only the constructions remain. Currently only a single-family lives on the *possessions*. The previously omnipotent figure of the overseer has turned into a guard. We are astonished by the size of these *possessions* when we look at them based on their current use.



Ring for tying up work animals.

The houses

Once you arrive at the possession, the first order of business is a visit to the **houses**. This is not one of those noble estates on Mallorca that resemble palaces. Architecturally speaking, Son Real is a modest rural holding. However, it has the appeal that its traditional facilities are very well preserved. The complex of buildings offers a compact image of tones hovering between ochre and grey with extremely simple lines. A visit to Son Real will give you a glimpse of a world that has practically vanished. It evokes a rural Mallorca, the origin of which is lost in the mists of time and began to decline in the 1960s with the rise in tourism.

The Son Real complex is made up of buildings from different periods. If you stand in front of the entrance to the cloister or courtyard, you can see the part that belongs to **Can Morell** on your left. At the back of the cloister, the house that crosses it is **Can Paloni**, and the most visible building, which is located on the right, is called **Ca s'Am-itger** or Cas Amos, the overseers' home.

If you would like to imagine the architectural evolution of Son Real, you have to look at the side wall of Can Morell, near which there is an elevated platform in front of the

ancient *sestadors* (sheep stables), which are now an interpretation center. You will immediately realize that this large wall is ancient. You can tell by the way it is made, but especially by the three buttresses that jut out from it. You can also note the remains of a tower absorbed afterwards by the construction. You can make it out by the difference in height, the finish on the corners and the square layout, to which more walls were later added. Above it has an ancient wall belfry. In fact, the nearby possession of Son Serra de Marina (at km 13.3 on the same motorway) still preserves a large defense tower, also with a wall belfry, similar to the one that Son Real must have had. Here we can find the original heart of the estate, a simple fortified building dating from the 15th to 16th century that reminds us of the vast dangers entailed in living near the coast back then. Pirate incursions were commonplace, as the Balearic Islands were the border zone during the lengthy conflict between Spain and France. France's Turkish and Berber allies set out from the coasts of North Africa to attack the islands.

Next to the **cloister** you can also see a semicircular arch that would have been the first entrance to Can Morell. This fragment is one of the most interesting historic rem-

Balustrade of the early house lived in by the estate owners.



Son Real courtyard.





nants on the estate. The information centre and toilets are located in this part of the houses, featuring a series of arches.

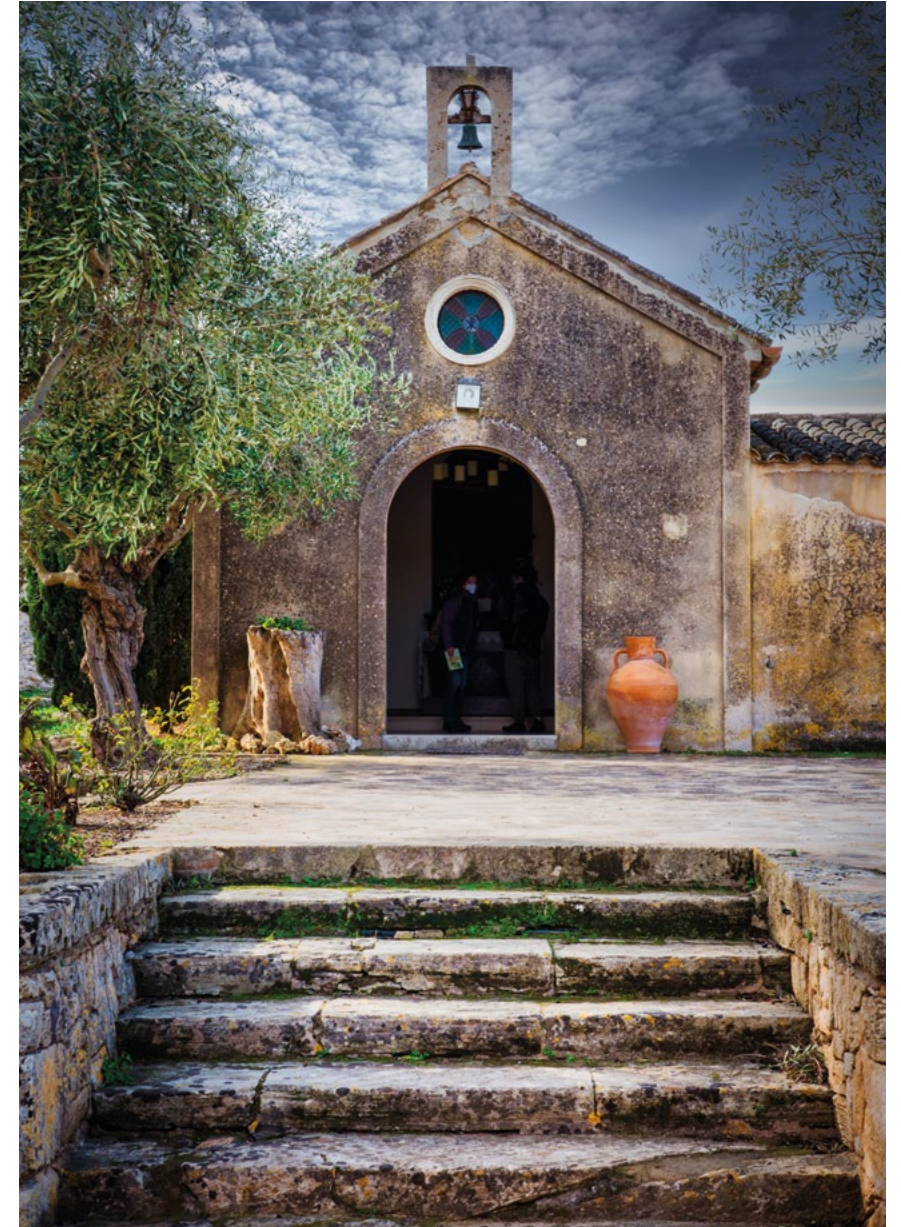
Can Paloni, also known as Can Mireat, was built later. It was recently refurbished. Near it there are large stables that close off the southern side of the cloister. The most interesting house is the one on your right as you arrive. Ca s'Amitger or Cas Amos was first the home of the owners. This can be seen in the signs of prestige that differentiate it from the other houses. It has a vegetable garden closed off by a large stone wall with curious windows that resemble embrasures and served to ventilate the area. Arriving along the pathway, your attention will immediately be drawn to the magnificent corner stones, probably carved from stones from the prehistoric settlement. The wall is built using horizontal slabs, and the entrance with a peak bearing the date of "1900" on the threshold stands out. This date is also carved on a lateral stone. To give a noble presence to this part, a crude balustrade was built which must be the only decorative motif in this complex. Outside the former owners' house, you can see closed-up windows and doors that were carved out at a later

date, which indicate that the house underwent a series of refurbishments. Even though the balustrade serves to give a sign of prestige, the coziest part is the facade that looks out onto the cloister. There you can find the typical Mallorcan esplanade, and behind it, the door, windows and side bench where much of life took place. Inside, it also still preserves a magnificent fireplace that harks back to the long winter nights with the evenings spent in front of the fire when there was no other entertainment but spinning tales and fantastical stories.

The **cloister** is unquestionably the most picturesque spot in the complex. In the middle is the opening of a chapel-shaped well which served as a community space for both work and festivities. Despite their simplicity, all the constructions are exceedingly elegant, and what particularly stands out is the play of the diagonals made up of the roofs and gutters for collecting rainwater. On the walls you can still see many remains from yesteryear, such as the iron rings to tie up livestock and hangers, horizontal iron pieces where pails for milk were hung while they awaited being collected. You can also see a fragment from a magnificent ancient stone pavement from the primitive esplanade.

Blind arch at the primitive entrance to Can Morell.

Ornament from Ca S'Amitger, with the construction date on the balustrade: 1900.



Chapel entrance.



Popular songs that mention Son Real

The name of Son Real has also entered the collective oral memory in many popular songs.

“Vols dir-me quin vent t’ha duit?
-Es mestral, que és furiós.
Per venir a veure-vos,
de dins Son Real som fuit.”

“Would you tell me which wind
brought you?
The mistral, which is furious.
To come to see you
We inside Son Real have fled.”

“Ses cases de Son Real
tenen quatre cantonades;
jo totes les he aplanades
amor, des que hi habitau”.

“The houses of Son Real
Have four corners;
I have smoothed all of them,
Love, since you live there.”

“A Son Real van a l’Infern
a Son Serra al Purgatori
a Son Marí a la Glòria
i a Son Doblons en el Cel”.

“To Son Real the inferno comes
To Son Serra, purgatory
To Son Marl the glory
And to Son Doblons heaven”



In the foreground, the former sheep stables, today the interpretation centre. In the background, Casa Nova.

The new house

Around the side of Can Morell you can find the ancient **sheep stables** (*sestadors*), now used as the interpretation center. A visit to the exhibition illustrates the rural universe in striking contrast to the contemporary world. Back then, human activity was fully adapted to the cycles of nature, materials were exploited to the utmost and everything was based on the culture of effort. New technologies and social mores are taking us ever further from that time. In the 20th century, one of these stables was used to

build a new house for the owners, which you can see from the two different heights and a balcony. **Casa Nova**, the new house, served as the residence for the owners until the estate was sold to the government of the Balearic Islands. Later, it was refurbished and inside it are two rooms housing a permanent exhibition and another room for temporary exhibitions. In front of the entrance you can see another portal with spheres, and behind it, on the back of Can Paloni, there remains a fragment of a *mur ciclopi* (a wall built with large slabs of varying sizes) in fairly good condition that belonged

to some prehistoric structure. A little further on, outside the tour route, you can see the rubble of a watermill which was powered by a mule. You can also see a small chapel. The new house had all the elements of a noble house: a spacious entryway, a noble staircase and many rooms. On the front part you can see a stone bench, and near the bench a dry wall begins. On the other side you can see what used to be a garden, now totally overgrown, which served as a recreational area. A large eucalyptus tree rises up majestically in this spot.



The woodsman of Son Real

Son Real even has a book of poetry dedicated to the estate, a work from the pen of Rafel Bordoy i Pomar. It is entitled *Camins oberts a l'alba* (Pathways Open at Dawn) and below we have reproduced an excerpt devoted to the woodsman of the estate.

“He was called Xalí and he had nine children, a tiny stone-and-mud house and hunting grounds for catching thrushes, in the winter, when the mornings are cold and the clouds grey. Loyalty and honesty were his code, and he watched his children grow and the bitter days pass by. He died poorly, as he had lived, and left no inheritance other than his sad smile, the pride of a job accomplished and a throng of grandchildren that today remember having seen him in a yellowing photo one day on the hunt... with the lords.”



Aerial view of Figueral de Son Real archaeological site.

Es Figueral of Son Real

From here you can visit the first of the archaeological sites that characterize Son Real. Continuing along the pathway that leaves from Casa Nova you go through a portal and enter the zone known as Es Figueral. Right upon entering it, you can see an ancient pigsty built using the tapia (mud wall) technique, which shows the popular typology

with drinking troughs, slop troughs and corners featuring very skillfully carved blocks.

Es Figueral has two elements of interest: the quarries and the rubble from the pre-Talayotic period. As you move along the pathway that leads to the monumental complex, you will run into the largest **quarry**. It is open on the surface with numerous inclined planes that correspond to the tests that the stonecutters made to find the

best layers of stone. You can see the marks of the stone-cutter's hammer centimeter by centimeter; their tool was a type of large, blunt hammer with a pointed tip at either end that was used to manually extract the stone. Partly occupied by trees, this quarry is a curious sight and its age seems incontestable, even though we cannot date it precisely.

In the same area there are four more smaller quarries.



The estate still engages in traditional livestock farming activities.



The large navetiforme that presides over the Es Figueral area in Son Real.

They are located around the hill you can see on your right, just abutting the motorway. One of these quarries opens up right on the top of the hill, while the others are just a few metres away. In the opinion of archaeologist Guillem Rosselló Bordoy, some of these stone quarries may well date from the prehistoric or Roman period. Son Real estate is rich in stones, as we can find other quarries on the coast and close to the stream, in addition to the sand mines. From all these quarries,

low quality sandstone was mined. The quarries are no longer used.

Walking around 30 metres further you will run into the Es Figueral **archaeological complex** of Son Real, a cluster of pre-Talayotic *navetiformes* (horseshoe-shaped structures dating from the Early Bronze Age), although their purpose is not entirely clear. This type of construction is around 3,000 years old. Here they seem to have also had a ritual purpose. The pre-Talayotic *navetiformes* tend to



Navetiforme dug out of the rock in Es Figueral.

have extremely thick walls made using large stone slabs filled in with gravel. The walls joined as they went up, but the roof was almost surely made of branches and pressed mud. Inside, an extended family would live, close to 20 individuals, and they always had a central fireplace. You will soon see several magnificent walls, extremely thick ones built in an apsidal shape. Even though at first, they might look indecipherable, all you have to do is climb to the top of the hill to understand what you are seeing. On

the upper part a majestic *navetiforme* was built with walls that reach as high as two metres. You can also see two column bases inside. This monument seems to symbolically dominate the entire site. Around it other *navetiformes* are clustered, forming a set of eight. One of them located at a lower level particularly stands out with its bench carved out of the rock, a unique case on Mallorca.

This model of pre-Talayotic habitat is fairly common: one or several *navetiformes* occupying an accessible and gen-

erally flat site. However, in this case it is an atypical layout, especially due to the number of structures concentrated in a single site. This has led certain archaeologists to believe that it might have been a transitional settlement between the period of the construction of *navetas* and the period of *talayots*. It is curious that the inside of these buildings shows the same form as the artificial burial caves dating from the same period, as if it were an architectural constant that bore some kind of meaning. This site continued where today the motorway lies, and across from it there are more remains on the other side. It was built in the Early Bronze Age, in the pre Talayotic period, but it remained inhabited until the first Talayotic period dating from around 1010 BC. Afterwards, it was apparently abandoned, even though it was once again temporarily occupied during the Islamic centuries. The excavation conducted by Guillem Rosselló Bordoy and Joan Camps Coll in 1965 did not reveal any materials of major importance, although numerous animal remains were detected, including dogs, shellfish and geese.

Surroundings of the houses

Before visiting the estate, you should go back to the Son Real houses, whose environs also have certain points of interest, such as the esplanade located in front of the entrance, with rocks that have been worn down with the centuries and the dry walls running in front of it. A **silo** carved into the rock was discovered on the land located on the other side of the wall. It is a little under one meter deep and around 50 centimetres in diameter. This type of receptacle was often used in the ancient world to store wheat and other foodstuffs, as the coolness of the land acted like our refrigerators today. Agricultural civilizations like the Iberians always had silo fields around their settlements that show bustling activity. Despite this, the Talayotic culture does not seem to have practised agriculture to this extent, judging from the fact that relatively few silos have been found. From this we can gather that it was a more livestock-oriented society. It should be said that for centuries, the *possessions* also had underground storage sites. In many cases they were used to store valuable objects in the event of danger. Rural theft and banditry were a veritable plague for many

The estate buildings. On the left, Casa Nova (New House) and, on the right, the older buildings.





Agricultural use of the estate, consisting of a field of almond trees and pastureland.

centuries. Later, the same hiding places were used by the smugglers who unloaded their goods in spots along the coast and secreted them away in these hiding places until they were distributed. Because of its strategic location, Son Real was a site of a great deal of smuggling. It should come as no surprise that the wells like this one were used as hiding places. On the southern part of this enclosure you can see the remains of two ancient seedbeds.

On the same plot, above a small undulation in the land, several **quarries** that were well-concealed by the vegetation open up. This was probably the site where the blocks with which the houses were built were mined. Very close by, just a few metres from a stone surface that juts out in the middle of the crop land, you can see two walls made of carved slabs. Judging from their layout, they seem to have been part of a building, probably a *navetiforme*.

We also recommend that you take a look at the **corner** of the dry stone wall that flanks the entrance to this enclosure or seedbed. Several very well carved large stones reveal a possible prehistoric origin. Continuing a few metres further south you can see a type of platform built with large stones. This is a **former oxen ramp** which served as a platform so that the oxen could climb into the lorry that was placed at its height.



Phases in prehistory

The prehistoric sequence of Mallorca is still the subject of debate, because as of today we cannot cite the precise date when mankind arrived to the island. The most ancient evidence seems to date back to the Copper Age, around 4,500 years ago. Back then, the habitats were concentrated in small circular-shaped huts. This was when megalithic tombs like the one in Son Real began to be built.

Later came the Early Bronze Age (around 4,000 years ago), when the artificial burial caves were built, along with horseshoe-shaped homes called *navetes* or *navetiformes*. A major change came about later, as part of the stage known as the Talayotic Period around 3,000 years ago, when civilization entered the Iron Age. The type of materials, the design of towns and even the type of society changed, the latter to become more hierarchical and warlike. This civilization left monuments on Son Real as important as the necropolises on the La Punta des Fenicis and L'illot des Porros.

The Roman conquest in 123 BC marked the end of this culture, which was then assimilated into the Latin world. Nevertheless, no ethnic rupture took place, and many settlements remained inhabited, albeit with changes, until the Middle Ages.



The settlement

The prehistory of Son Real could be compared to a book of which we only have a few scattered pages. Nor do we know its title or subject; we just have a few excerpts. Precisely the most important piece of information we have to help us decipher this prehistory has yet to be discovered or is inside the houses. We are referring to the zone between the motorway and

the possession, which is crossed perpendicularly by the entrance road.

If you look closely at an aerial photograph, you can clearly see a profile that marks something similar to an oval silhouette. Therein lies the mystery of Son Real; those are the remains of a vast Talayotic settlement.

One of the characteristics of the Talayotic culture that lasted from the end of the second millennium BC until 123 BC, the year of the Roman conquest, are the settlements.

Under this field lie the ruins of the Son Real settlement.

Society ceased to be structured around clusters of *nave*-tes and shifted into a pre-urban phase. Oval-shaped settlements were built, enclosed by *murades ciclòpies* (walls built with large slabs of varying sizes) where, around a talayot-shaped central core, a series of buildings were clustered. Everything leads us to posit a hierarchical structure made up of a governing family and a popular class that depended directly on the family, a similar model to the one that appears in Homer's works, and even resembling feudal society.

These settlements generated another kind of ritual constructions such as exterior talayots, sanctuaries, ceremonial platforms, necropolises and the like. All together they revealed the significance of this society, whose origin could be justified in the heroic sagas and legends of the governing family. The fact that Mallorca is overrun with these settlements (around 250 of them), with an average distance among them of three kilometres, casts doubts as to the overall organization of the island. Was there some kind of king or hierarch who ruled over all the settlements? Were all the populations at war with each other, which would explain the construction of walls?

Talayotic culture is the only one that can be defined as genuinely Mallorcan. There is nothing similar on the Iberi-



Row of stones on the ancient wall of the settlement.

an Peninsula or in southern France. Only other islands like Menorca (quite similar though not identical) and Corsica and Sardinia have parallel features. Despite its singularity, we have virtually no information from that period. We do not know how it emerged: whether they arrived from abroad or were the product of an internal evolution; nor do we know what language they spoke, nor how they were governed, nor who their gods were... The only information we have comes from classical authors who, in passing references, portray a poor, primitive society in

which young people had to resort to becoming mercenaries in order to find a way out. In this context, Son Real poses a very interesting problem, as the estate has large sacred and funerary grounds next to it. This is a unique feature that distinguishes Son Real from the remaining known settlements. Therefore, the question that arises immediately is: did the Son Real settlement have some sort of pre-eminence over the other ones, and is this why the sacred grounds were created? Anyone interested in history can only wonder when see-



The location of the old settlement's defensive wall can be identified by the oval-shaped line of vegetation.

ing a field sown with forage: that is all that remains of the settlement. The silhouette from the aerial photograph shows us a well-defined area where a great deal of Talayotic and Roman ceramics can be found. If you go along the entrance pathway to the houses in the middle part, you can see on either side a slight change in the level of the land, which becomes narrower as it approaches the motorway. This is where the stone wall stood, the meagre remains of which can be distinguished in a handful of fragments. These stones mainly corresponded to the

lower socle. The rest was probably disassembled a long time ago, and part of it was used for the numerous subsequent stone constructions. Perhaps the settlement changed in the Roman period. Later an Islamic farmstead would be built there using the same stones, and when the first possession was set up after the conquest, they made use of the remaining slabs for the house and stone walls. The fact is that very little is left on the ground. You can see a small **esplanade** with numerous large slabs covered with trees and vegetation at the entrance



Covered well.

to the field. This was an ancient seedbed and might also be the remains of a talayot. All the rest remains pending an archaeological study that will disinter the settlement and recover the pages from this ancient book. If this study confirms that the silhouette seen in the aerial photographs corresponds to the outline of the settlement, we would be looking at one of the largest settlements known. The area within the outline of the wall measures 15,700 square metres. The largest of the settlements found to date is Can Daniel Gran in the town of Pollen4a, which measures 16,900 square metres. After that, they are all smaller: Talaies de Sant Jordi in Santanyí, 14,790; Es Pedregar in Lluçmajor, 14,000; and Ses Païsses in Arta 13,500.

Would that mean that this settlement held a special status on Talayotic Mallorca, and would this explain the vast funerary grounds? Was it the site of a royal lineage, or did it have power over the other settlements? The questions raised are fascinating and justify a meticulous archaeological study. To begin with, numerous flint shards have been gathered from the ground. This, in the opinion of archaeologist Jordi Hernández, might suggest the existence of a workshop where this material was carved. When we look from the ancient seedbed at the field where there had been a settlement centuries earlier, we realize that its area did not end where the motorway lies today. The zone of Son Real that was not purchased by the gov-



Inside the cistern.



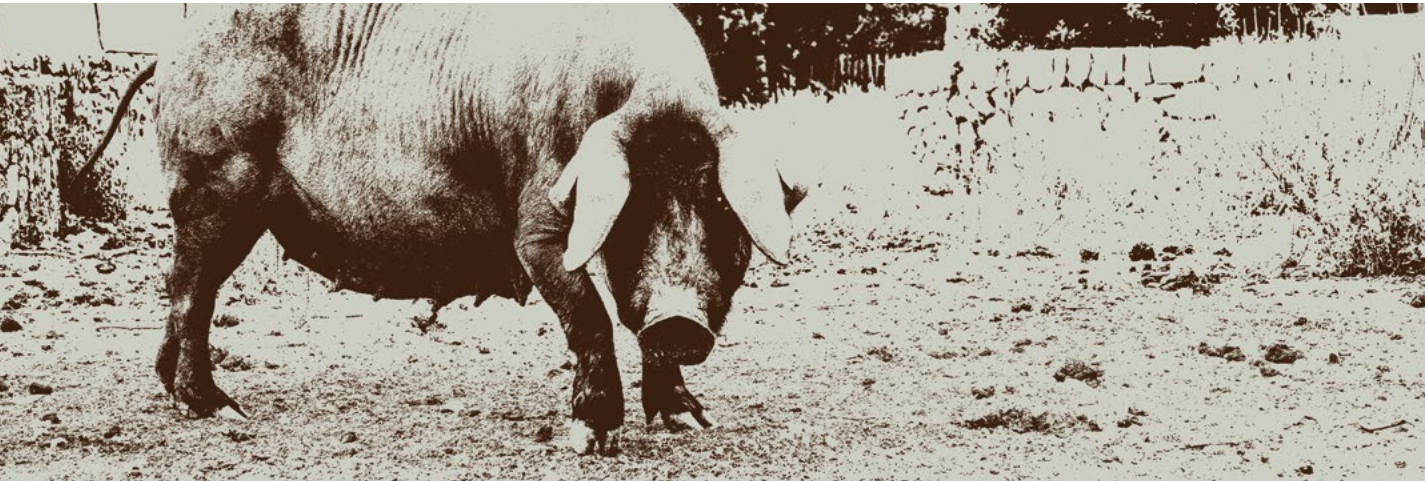
Large slabs on the walls of the cistern.

ernment of the Balearic Islands and extends southward on the other side of the motorway contains countless archaeological remains, ranging from a square-shaped talayot with rooms attached to megalithic slabs, to remains of constructions, ceramic shards and more. This entire zone, today only crossed by herds of livestock, was a major population nucleus, in Roman times as well.

The ‘aljub’ (cistern)

If you head towards the pathway that leads to the sea, you will come upon a portal. On the right you can make out the opening of a **chapel-shaped cistern**. This eth-

nologic element also has its interest, as it shed light on the complex system of how water was used. It was stored in a reservoir, following traditions with Roman origins, which enabled several different watering troughs to be set up for the livestock. The cistern is very skilfully built and measures around 25 metres long by around five metres wide. After a restoration, a window was carved to the outside to show the internal construction of the reservoir. The presence of different large stones on its walls is remarkable, as they are probably prehistoric in origin. From this site you can see different very handily built dry walls that form dividers and outbuildings attached to the ancient stables.

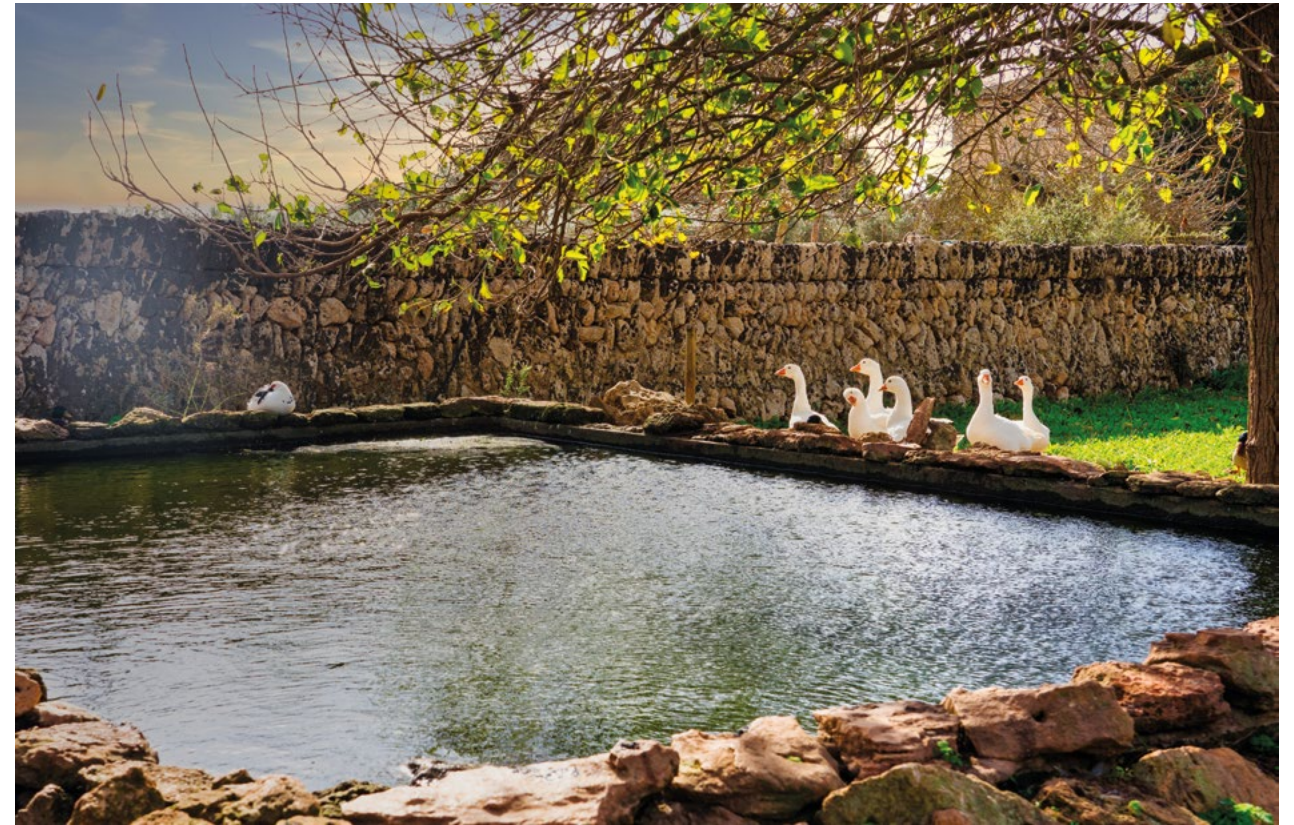


Black pigs

One of the main attractions for children and many tourists is black pig husbandry. The black pig is a breed that is native to Mallorca whose origins pose a historical dilemma. They are the result of a mix of Iberian and perhaps Celtic or oriental specimens, which reached the island with the different waves of human migrations. Therefore, their origins might be quite ancient. They are regarded as interesting from the genetic standpoint because their morphology is quite primitive. In addition to their colour, one of their characteristic features is the existence of two glands that hang down from their necks. This has a dominant genetic behavior and appears when they are bred with different breeds. The fact that these pigs have been a fundamental resource in family economies has ensured their conservation. In her celebrated *Winter in Majorca*, George Sand talks about the pre-eminence of the pig in Mallorcan society in the early 19th century.

They have been defined as “harmonious, rustic, medium-sized animals with a frontonasal cavity and fine bones. The skin is black coloured and slate toned.” Their thick fur seems to make them look darker. The breed is recognized and has a genealogical tree. The black pig is found all over Mallorcan, but the classic areas where it is produced are precisely marinas, such as the one in Son Real, due to the type of vegetation that grows there. It is an animal that consumes plant species that are often overlooked by other animals.

The male pigs are impressive, as are the female pigs, always followed by their piglets. The resurgence of the black pig mainly started after 1980, when the denomination of origin was approved for Mallorcan *sobrassada* sausage, which must truly be made with the flesh of this animal. The same holds true of *porcella* made of roasted black pig, another traditional dish.



Son Real is still an active rural estate, with different areas for the animals.

Pigsties

Take the L'Illot des Porros pathway, which leads to the sea. On the left you can see some **pigsties** that were used to raise black pigs, an autochthonous race on Mallorca. This area was laid out with educational purposes in mind, especially for the schools that come to visit and get to know that estate and learn about the different livestock species from Mallorca, such as the autochthonous lamb.

At this point you should observe an **ancient pathway**, probably centuries old, that left its mark on the rock. You can find it on the same side as the fence that runs along the left side. It is just 15 metres long, but it reminds us that for generations it was a place of passage for men and carts heading towards the forest and sea. This ancient pathway, along with others you will visit on the coast, form a fascinating group when reconstructing the transport systems used for centuries.



2. The Estate

The pathways

Here begins the tour around the inside of the estate. Son Real has an extremely irregular layout. On the western side it is bounded by the Son Bauló stream, meaning that it follows the sinuous curve of the waterway until it reaches the motorway that marks its southern boundary. This first zone encompasses what is known as Es Cremat (the burned area) after a fire that took place back in 1981. The public part of the estate is interrupted because of a tract that measures 1.5 kilometres long by 250 metres wide, which runs from the motorway to the sea and remains privately owned. After this brief interruption, Son Real continues along the motorway until the boundary of the property known as El Quilò-

metre (The Kilometer). The eastern boundary is the entrance road to El Quilòmetre located further eastward. But the boundaries of Son Real are not regular on this side either, as 800 metres later the separation retreats, forming an angle. A large pine grove and two ancient sand quarries remain outside the public land, and the line marking the boundary between these two estates heads straight ahead towards the beginning of En Casat sand bank. As a whole, the estate has the shape of a shoe seen from the side, with a strip-shaped interruption on the western side. This entire area is crossed by two ancient pathways. The majority of these pathways lead to the sea and were used to transport pine trees and stones from the quarries, or to transport *posidònia* algae leaves from the coast.



Hunting grounds with nets.

The hunt at Son Real

Son Real estate has been used for hunting since antiquity. The owners organized hunts in which they caught up to 300 rabbits in a single day. The staff that worked on the estate was allowed to hunt rabbits, woodpigeons and thrushes. The partridges were considered the exclusive prey of the lords of the manor. The owners’ hunting outings with their partners were a major event that was celebrat-

ed with a lavish luncheon. The forest is a traditional site for hunting thrushes using *filats* (nets). Almost all the families that worked on the estate had their own coil (or hunting grounds assigned to them) where they strung the nets between two pine trees. Even today this art is still practiced, and you can see ladders with a chair hidden away where the birds go when they sleep on the ground.

Itinerary 2. L'Illet des Porros pathway

As you leave the estate a few metres away you will see a turn to the right which is off limits because it leads to the Es Figueral archaeological site. **The L'Illet des Porros pathway** leads you in a straight line towards the sea. On either side you can see a mixture of pine trees, wild olive trees and thickets, making a dense and fairly impenetrable forest. On the left runs the stone wall that fully encloses Sa Pietà, an area measuring 500 metres long and 300 wide. You will come to a major **crossroads**. Here you should choose which itinerary you would like to follow. If you

continue along number 2, you will travel along the traditional stretch of the L'Illet des Porros pathway until the refuge and La Punta des Patró, that is, the easternmost part of the estate. If you choose to take itinerary number 3, you will take practically the same route as the former one, but at a given point you will veer westward and from there more easily reach the megalithic tomb and the necropolis on La Punta des Fenicis. Finally, if you choose itinerary 4, you will go along the southern side of the estate, travelling by the ancient quarries, and later head towards the coast and also emerge at the necropolis. This is the longest route.



Entrance to En Gurgull cave.

In addition to these three routes, you can also see two other pathways heading off to the right which are off limits. They run through the easternmost part of the estate. Very close by, skirting a small hillock and hidden by the pine trees, is **En Gurgull cave**. It is catalogued as a manmade burial cave dating from prehistoric times. Next to it is a small stone mine, and its entrance, which was protected by two walls on either side, is quite small. Inside, it stands out for the chromatic interplay so characteristic of grottoes, based on ochre, sienna and the greenish cast of the moisture. This cave is around six metres wide and four deep, and the only thing that

draws your attention besides the wall are two small ledges carved into the rock. After its initial funerary use, which explains its proximity to the zone with the houses where there was a habitat in prehistoric times, later it must have been used as a refuge or stable. A few metres further up, there is a hunting blind. In this same area of the forest, a pathway runs alongside the extension of Es Figueral and leads to the **S'Arena hollow**, one of the large sand quarries that operated until the 1990s. The existence of large fossil dunes near the estate fostered these sand mines, which were used for con-



struction. When Son Real was declared an Area of Special Interest, these sand mines ceased to operate. Nowadays a few scattered young pine trees have begun to sprout in the quarry, but the casemate of the employees still remains and you can see the results of the mining efforts in a flat area measuring around 600 metres. In the surrounding forest are the hunting grounds (coils)

of the hunters, with the wooden ladders that they used to string the nets for hunting thrushes. The forest also contains one of the manmade watering troughs with a cement base that was installed to provide the birds with water. You can also see the turtles that go there to drink. Go back to the crossroads. This time take itinerary number 2. This means travelling 1.7 kilometres until the sea

along a good pathway that has no tricky spots. The only consideration worth bearing in mind is the heat, especially on summer days, when it is more pleasant to walk along the coast. This pathway travels through the **forest of Son Real**. The first stretch runs very close to the boundaries of the estate, but later it bends slightly to the west. In the autumn,



One of the ponds found scattered about the estate.

The former site of a sand quarry.

the flocks of starlings are quite spectacular, as at sundown they fly through the trees resembling a veritable cloud. After you have come to the halfway point in the trail, you will run into a turn with a sign indicating itinerary 3, which we will save for later. You can begin to catch clearer glimpses of the coast on the horizon, and the next element of interest you will run into are ruins on



Today the former bathhouse of the owners is a refuge.

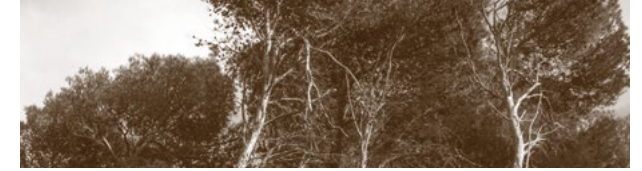
Pine trees were one of Son Real's sources of wealth, as they were sold to make wooden.

the right which used to be the **woodsman's hut**. These are constructions where the people who felled the pine trees lived temporarily. The living conditions were harsh for those workers, who often only had simple chamomile soup for food. Today only half-crumbling walls remind us of these human histories. As you get closer to the sea and can make out two alignment towers, which we will refer to later, you will see the **refuge**. This was the former bathhouse of the lords of the estate, who used it to spend a few days there in the summer. This area is commonly known as Es Quarter,



referring to the customs post that kept watch over the coast for years. Smuggling was a constant activity in such depopulated and extensive areas as this estate. During the post-war years, the Civil Guard made nightly rounds from Son Bauló to Son Serra de Marina, and they only had a hut near the sea. There, they piled up *posidònia* leaves and placed a sheet on top of it to sleep. The refuge is located in a lovely spot with large pine trees whose shade offers protection from the sun. Just a few metres away, the fence reminds you that you are at the edge of Son Real and that the coastal area is begin-

ning. You can leave the estate through a gate. The tour throughout the area from here heading towards the water is described in the section on the coast.



Colliers and Es Metro

Pine trees have traditionally been part of the wealth of Son Real. They were used to make coal, for example. The method consisted of building a silo based on a pile of wood topped off with green branches, grass and earth that made a type of semi-spherical oven with an orifice for inserting stumps. Other holes were made that were covered or uncovered depending on whether more or less combustion was needed. Finally, the oven was lit, and inside the slow combustion turned the lumber into coal. A collier's job was harsh. During the season when the silos were made, the entire family had to sleep in the forest to keep watch to make sure that the fire did not go out. For shelter, they built very simple huts with reed roofs and a bed of straw. At that time all the kitchens were fed with coal and this product was easily sold or used for the family's own consumption.

Pine wood also had other purposes. There were groups of men who worked as lumberjacks, some of them coming from as far away as Manacor or Arta. The branches were sold as fuel for ovens. The trunks were cut into units called metros which were purchased by lorry drivers who sold them as beams. Older people recall that 50 years ago the pine grove was very clear because almost everything was used. Even the small vegetation such as thickets were cut down to be used as fuel in the wood-burning ovens. At Son Real, each family had its own oven for baking bread.



Pine grove in Son Real with Cap de Ferrutx in the background.

Itinerary 3

This marked route is not very different from the previous one, number 2. The difference lies in the fact that around 500 metres from the coast, it heads a little further west. The last stretch is spectacular because of the huge pine trees and magnificent views of the coast. You can make out the entire extension between Victoria (Alcúdia) and Cap de Ferrutx (Artà), a promontory that closes off the bay and makes the landscape extremely picturesque. Both alignment towers stand out like needles facing the sea. Just as the last part of itinerary 2 goes through the pine grove, in this case what you can see is a vast plain covered with brushwood. Here you can find an indication

showing the path to the megalithic tomb or dolmen, which is around 200 metres away on top of a rocky elevation. However, it is easier to understand and find if you approach it from the coast. A gate leads out of the estate, very close to La Punta des Fenicis necropolis, which you can see up ahead.

Itinerary 4. The quarry pathway

This third itinerary, marked as number 4, first takes you to the southern part of the estate, closer to the motorway. The second stretch also heads towards the sea. It extends a total of three kilometres until you reach the coast. Start from the crossroads located 400 metres from the

houses. The two itineraries marked number two and three continue forward and take you directly to the coast. Take the left pathway, which is marked with a number 4. While the L'Illot des Porros pathway leads you from the houses to the sea, crosses the pine grove and gives glimpses of the bay on the horizon, this second pathway is different. It skirts the agricultural area of the state and passes by the ancient sand quarries. It is a route worth travelling slowly so you can enjoy the green landscape, the nooks that are right out of the past, far from the world of the cars that are travelling outside, as the motorway runs parallel to this stretch of the pathway. Walk around 150 metres, passing by a pathway on the right that is off limits and leads to the final stretch of the L'Illot des Porros pathway. A little further on, a turn

to the left leads you to the entryway to **Sa Pleta**. Here the landscape is totally agricultural, with the silhouette of the houses far in the distance. Keep walking until you run into a large esplanade. This is a reminder of the November 2001 tragedy, when a rain and wind storm swept in from the north and levelled thousands of pine trees. The gale snapped them in half as if they were pencils, then levelled them and left them with the roots in the air. The spectacle was dantesque: motorways and roads cut off by trees, decimated forests and especially vast amounts of wood to remove. Many hundreds of pine trees that the wind blew over in Son Real piled up on this esplanade. After that they were cut into pieces, and today only scattered pieces of wood remain.



Sa Talaieta geodesic signal.

Sa Talaieta

Around 200 metres further on, you will come across another path to the right, which leads to a bird hide. Inside the forest is one of the most curious spots in Son Real, **Sa Talaieta**, a humble elevation only 49.26 metres high, according to the maps, which is the highest point on the estate. This has conferred on it the honor of housing two geodesic signals. The larger and more modern one has a typical shadow prism with a sign warning that “tamper-

ing with this signal is penalized by law”. Above it is a characteristic cylinder that serves as a visual indicator. An old ringed staircase lets you climb to the top, where you can catch fantastic views: the entire estate looks like an explosion of green with the sea in the background and the impressive mountains of Arta closing off the bay. Nearby, another older signal is lower and simpler. Yet the most important part of this area is a slab measuring one and a half metres that juts out of the ground right there. To the side there is another similar one that

Sa Pedra Foradada, a megalithic stone slab.



has already fallen, and nearby there is at least one other in the same conditions. These large stone slabs resemble megalithic stones and are similar to another one in the part of Son Real that is still private property. The fact that only the slabs remain without any kind of rubble makes these remains peculiar. They might have been part of the walls of a naveta, or perhaps they are the remains of a construction from an earlier period. In fact, it is curious that the geodesic signal was installed in the same place where prehistoric man had already built another construction. This fact points to Sa Talaieta as a strategic spot, a true lookout point over this part of the coast and sea with another fascinating fact: Josep Mascaró Passarius, geographer and archaeologist, held that the archaeological wealth of Son Real was related to Menorca. In fact, the lesser of the Balearic Islands is located to the north-east, beyond the bay, just 37 miles away. According to Mascaró, the monuments that were built on the estate can partly be explained by visual contact with the neighbouring island.

It is difficult to see Menorca from the necropolis or the coast, but from Sa Talaieta, on a clear day you can easily see the easternmost point of Menorca, with the flat

coastline of Ciutadella and even the silhouette of El Toro. Perhaps these primitive slabs were primitive watch places or visual signals related to this extension of the coast and sea. They are one of the many archaeological enigmas still yet to resolve.

Archaeological remains

Continue along itinerary 4 and you will soon see another pathway heading to the right, which is also off limits. This is an ancient trail with stones that are extremely worn out on some stretches. This area, too, conceals **archaeological remains**, namely a corner built with large stones, today almost all of which are covered by vegetation. It closely resembles the construction in the crop field located across from the house. This pathway runs down through the forest and leads to one of the pathways heading to the sea.



Turtles are the most emblematic animal of Son Real.

Nature in Son Real

One of Son Real's greatest values is its variety of ecosystems. In the estate you can find pine groves, holm oak groves, brushwood, wetlands, dune systems and rocky marine ecosystems. All of this means the estate has a vast wealth of both flora and fauna. The Son Real forest is dominated by pine trees, yet there are also savin, thickets and evergreen buckthorn. There are areas covered with a tangle of thick scrub, which creates a strange impression of coziness and privacy, a forest isolated in itself. Another unique feature is the presence of holm oak and strawberry tree groves. In the brushwood area you can see wild olive trees with their silvery green leaves, asphodel that looks like plant candelabra, and lemon rockrose with its white-petalled flowers, among other species. A totally different environment is the coast, where sea fennel, sea lavender and sea daffodil grow. Right on the

coastline, savin and pine trees take on tortuous shapes, twisted by the force of the northern wind. Likewise, the wetlands around the stream are characterized by rushes, reeds, plume, grass and glasswort. The totemic animal at Son Real is the Mediterranean turtle, many of which can be seen. This species, today endangered, was hunted in the past to be sold as a pet, and it somehow symbolises the nature on the estate. Plus, you can also spot rabbits, partridges, turtledoves, thrushes, owls, martens, porcupines, frogs, green frogs and water snakes. Eleonora's falcons often visit the forest during the late summer and early autumn months. All four itineraries have signs explaining the different plant and animal species in the area.



S'Ametlerar with the Son Real houses in the background.

Ancient sand quarries

The pathway continues to skirt Sa Pleta on the left until this area gives way to **S'Ametlerar**: a large almond tree grove that boasts a lovely bucolic air with the houses in the distance. Very soon you will enter a large esplanade surrounded by piles of sand. These piles will remind you that you are in the area that was used to extract sand to be used in the construction industry until it was declared an Area of Special Interest in 1991. These sand quarries have had a major impact on the land, as can be clearly

seen in aerial photographs. In order to gather sand, the fossil dunes that the forest had colonized, which had reached a considerable height, were destroyed. In some spots you can still see piles of stones gathered during excavation that were later rejected. Today the site of this quarry looks like a vast amphitheater, and it is a picturesque spot.

The route now leads to another crossroads. The path to the left is off limits; it is a former quarry road and leads to the **S'Arena hill**, which was lined with stones because of the lorry traffic. It runs along the southernmost part of

There is a small holm oak grove around the *S'Arena* hill.



S'Ametlerar, but when it draws closer to the motorway it passes by a curious area on the right where small holm oaks grow, in contrast to the sand dunes under them. Go back to the crossroads. Following itinerary 4 you enter a pine grove, going by a small pond in the middle of a clearing on your left. Around 100 metres further one, you can see two more pathways on your right, which are also off limits. The one on the right leads to other **sand quarries**, where the mining reached depths of up to four metres. The path on the left leads to the motorway.

If you continue to the right along itinerary 4 you will enter the second part of this route. Until now you have been walking through the agricultural area and you will have passed the areas where sand was mined in the past. The landscape now changes and you can see a thick forest where the evening light creates charming effects on a clear day. It is hard to imagine that you are close to one of the main tourist hubs on the island, because everything seems to evoke mediaeval times when deer and wild boars ran free through these desolate areas.

The second part of the pathway heads directly to the sea, crossing through the pine forest and scrubland. The first pathway heading to the left leads to the boundaries of the estate, which are marked by a fence. In this area you can see strawberry trees on the edges of the pathway. As you continue along itinerary 4 you will first cross a section of the forest and then another much clearer part, where the large pine trees seem like decoration. After a while you will again enter the pine forest and find a pathway heading right that leads to itineraries 2 and 3. Itinerary 4 takes you into an area with little vegetation and sweeping views of the bay and *L'Illot des Porros*. This is a lovely panorama which is especially beautiful right before sunset. Finally, you will reach the necropolis on *La Punta des Fenicis*.





L'Illot des Porros seen from La Punta des Patró.

La punta des Patró

We will begin your visit to the coastline of Son Real by its easternmost point, assuming that most visitors take itinerary 2, which ends in the refuge. In this area, after a forest populated by spectacular pine trees, you will pass through a gate and enter the dune area. The scenery from here is some of the loveliest on the entire estate. In front of you is La **Punta des Patró**, a rocky promontory

that juts out 150 metres into the sea. This inlet, which has a small sand cavity in the middle, marks the easternmost boundary of the estate. After the En Casat sandbank, which extends along the length of a long beach, the land belongs to other owners. Next to it is L'Illot des Porros, and nearby are the two alignment towers. La Punta des Patró (Skipper's Point) still bears traces of a fisherman who lived there. On the rocks, which are often peopled by bathers, you can also see two ramps or plat-



Platform carved in the rock at La Punta des Patró.

forms for boats carved into the rock. The elderly people who live in Son Real remember a one-armed fisherman who lived in this hut for a stretch of time. He was a peculiar character, among other reasons because he had the habit — rare at the time — of swimming in the nude. The owner of the possession lent him a small boat, and despite the fact that he only had one arm, he caught plenty of fish which he then sold in Can Picafort. As you pass the point, you will come upon a small beach.

There you can see one of the many sand laboratories along this coastline. On the side are piles of shells and animal remains which, with the later erosion from the sea, ended up becoming sand. You can also see several blocks of stone in the area near the dunes, around 20 metres from the sea. They are the remains of a fascinating **sanctuary** dating from the Talayotic and Roman periods. In this area, the sand makes a type of talus that reveals the existence of buried struc-



Talayotic sanctuary in La Punta des Patró while being excavated.

tures. The same team that excavated the necropolis on La Punta des Fenicis discovered that a clandestine adventurer had dug out this site in 1996. Two years later the scientific excavation got underway. A fascinating structure emerged: a horseshoe-shaped construction with an antechamber built using large slabs. Despite its small size (it measures around eight metres wide by eight long) it had an intriguing element: a slab measuring 1.7 metres, vertically anchored, that jutted out above the wall, which though much cruder, is clearly reminiscent of the

taules (formed by two large rock slabs resembling a T) on Menorca. This is significant given the fact that no parallel to this type of monument, which was native to Menorca, the smallest of the Balearic Islands, had been found on Mallorca until then. Another aspect that is reminiscent of the Menorcan sanctuaries is the frontal position of the slab, placed right across from the entrance as if it were an element of worship, and embedded columns that serve no structural purpose. The facade was also slightly concave like other Mallorcan Talayotic structures.



The sanctuary as it looks today, after being covered with stones and sand by a storm.

The subsoil was full of ashes, burned goats' heads and ceramic shards. Among the remains there were many Iberian pieces, some of them from Ibiza, as well as amphorae and ceramics from Campagna. The most fascinating shard was *Ebusitan* ceramic with an inscription in Latin that was made with a burin when the material was still soft. It reads "CAENO UBI". Even though it has not yet been accurately translated, it dates from the 2nd century BC and is believed to possibly be a person's name (Caeno, son of Ubo) or the name of a local god. If so, it would be

quite important as until now nothing is known about the pantheon of deities in the early Balearic culture. Everything seemed to point to this being a place of worship where sacrifices were made, meaning that it served the same purpose as the *taules* on Menorca. The chronology seemed quite lengthy. First, several structures were erected along with two very sturdily-built stone homes. They might have been used for the sacrifices. This first phase can be dated back to the period between the 6th and 4th centuries BC. The second phase corresponds to

the construction of the building that was in use between the 3rd and 4th centuries BC. In this way, it is proven that the coast of Son Real remained a holy site where funerary deities were worshipped well into the period of Roman dominion. The shape of this sanctuary is also reminiscent of the large funeral chambers on the nearby L'Illot des Porros.

Unfortunately, this complex on La Punta des Patró also suffered from the after effects of the 2001 storm. The waves swept away the sand, covered the site and buried several stone blocks. Today you can only see scattered ashlar, but you should imagine that this was a site chosen for the religious invocations and practices that were somehow linked to the sea. With regard to this theory, the archaeologists who excavated Son Real have written: "The route from the settlement or settlements to the maritime necropolises through the pine grove in Son Real might reinforce and be part of the idea of the ritual transporting mankind to the hereafter, a journey that might continue symbolically over the sea"

The beach that extends from here eastward is known as the **En Casat sandbank**. On Cardinal Despuig's map

dating from 1785, this sandbank was called the Mar de les dones (Women's Sea), perhaps because it was where the women swam. The promontory that closes off the beach is La Punta Llarga of Son Real. The En Casat sandbank and the nearby pine grove served for years as a vacation area for the people from Petra. In the summertime, once the farming jobs were over, the families arrived in carts. Among the trees they stretched sheets that served as tents and spent a few days there. It was a festive time for enjoying the sea, free time, meals and lazy afternoons with the guitar. The elderly people remember that despite the crowds, there was never an incident there. The visitors were always respectful of each other.

The end of this beach has a special history and is popularly known as **Es Meteorito** (The Meteorite) because of an event that took place on the morning of the 12th of June 1944. The newspapers on Ibiza report that "the few people who were there at that time of night were suddenly surprised by an extremely brilliant light that turned the dark night into full daylight." According to the magazine *Urania*, the witnesses "watched with awe as a huge trail of light high in the sky, as wide as a fishing boat, left

Ferruginous stones from the supposed meteorite.



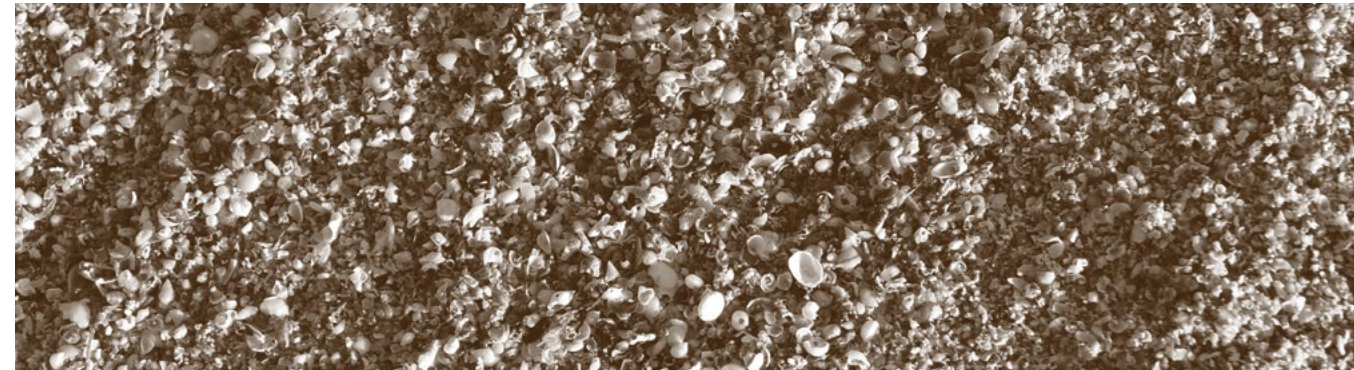
countless sparks in its wake on either side and headed towards Mallorca.”

That same night, some people from Santa Margalida claimed to have seen a huge explosion in the sea. Some even claim to have seen a large column of smoke. In 1983, the magazine *Astrum*, published by the Astronomy Club of Sabadell, ran an article by Salvador Sánchez that told: “I managed to find the only person who arrived at the site less than 24 hours after the impact. Mr Canuto Boloqui Alvarez, a retired soldier and avid amateur fisherman, was there, and according to his story he was horrified by the immense damage caused in the ‘marès’ (sandstone) stone, which was totally crushed and disintegrated. Embedded in the earth like a solid bullet was a black stone measuring around 60 by 40 centimetres, and when he tried to move it he suffered from minor burns on both hands.”

Sánchez reports that “the oldest people in the area claim that the blow could be heard more than 15 kilometres away, and they were sure that it was an explosion of a gunpowder magazine still left over from the Civil War.” The author claimed that “the nucleus is buried a few metres deep by the action of the sea, buried by its own re-

mains, the stones and sand that have accumulated over 42 years. It is calculated to have weighed around 100 kg.” Since then a large tract of dark crystallized stones with a heavy ferruginous component that appear scattered around the sand have been put down to the presumed meteorite, especially after a storm has stirred up the beach. Many people have gone to collect the remains of this “celestial meteorite”, which has come to be yet another of the myths of Son Real, even though it fell to Earth outside the boundaries of the estate.

Yet not everyone agrees with this version, and some historians like Andreu Muntaner doubt the existence of a meteorite. They recall that in the 19th century a boat laden with iron mineral sunk off the coast. The inhabitants of the environs extracted the load over the course of several days, and it accumulated on the beach, which received the name of “El Clot des Ferro” (Iron Hollow) partly because of this.



At Son Real you can see masses of shells and coral that will later become sand.

Sand

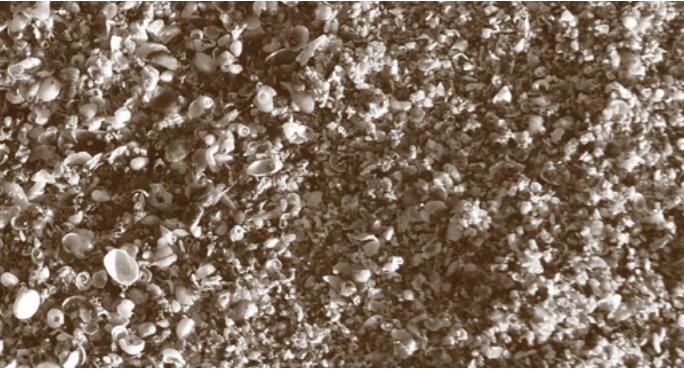
One of the characteristics of the beaches on the Balearic Islands is the fine sand which is pleasant to the touch and shiny in colour. The difference with the sand from other spots along the coastline of Spain is quite noticeable, and there is an explanation for this. Many rivers on the Iberian Peninsula run into the sea, carrying with them mineral deposits. The force of the water ends up turning these deposits into sand, which sometimes contain components such as slate and granite. In contrast, on the Balearic Islands, the absence of rivers makes this mineral component quite scant. The sand is made from biological matter: millions of tiny snails, shells, and corals are crushed until they become an almost pearly sand, the image that is always associated with paradise-like beaches.

The process of sand formation therefore has several phases. First of all, biological remains deposited in the zone are collected and slowly shattered by the waves. When they begin to break down, you can see a layer

of tiny fragments which will become sand in the next phase.

This dynamic is joined by the way beaches themselves work. The coastal zone needs interaction with the marine zone. The waves deposit the sand on the beaches, where dunes are formed. However, this sand, in turn, goes back to the sea during storms. This type of *breathing* continues between the submerged and terrestrial areas, and it is completed with the action of the *posidònia* leaves, which protect the sand deposited on the coast from the waves. A living beach is one in which this cycle has not been interrupted. However, when roads are built near the beach or the *posidònia* is removed, this *breathing* of the sand is also interrupted and the beach may lose sand more easily.

One of the main attractions of Son Real is the fact that it has an outdoor sand *laboratory*. On many spots along its coastline between the rocks you can see the organic remains that will later become sand. Their colour ranges



between bright white, light tones, and even bright reds. In other places you can see how these remains are now shattered yet retain some of their integrity. Then there are small sandbanks like the one located near La Punta des Patró, where the sand is already formed, and when you enter the waves you can even rub up against small barriers of red-coloured grains, which make highly picturesque lines.

Sand is thus a first-rate biological testimony and it is crucial to care for it to ensure that its production and replacement cycles are not interrupted. The importance of this process is reflected in a seminal book that was published by the University of the Balearic Islands: *Alternatives a la dependència de les platges de les Balears de la regeneració artificial continuada: informe Metadona* (Alternatives to the Beaches on the Balearic Islands' Dependence on Constant Artificial Regeneration: Metadona Report) by Antonio Rodríguez-Perea, Jaume Servera and Jose Angel Martín.

Seaweed beds

The bend in the coast between La Punta des Patró and the quarries that occupy the second rocky hill is characterised by **accumulations of 'posidònia'**. Here at times you could see piles up to two metres high made of the leaves from this marine plant (popularly known as *alga*, or seaweed). This product was traditionally used as fertiliser or for scattering in pigsties. For some time, it was also used to make mattresses, as it was believed that its effluvia was healthful. Sometimes small lagoons are formed in the more protected spots, where the stagnant water combines with the brown of the *posidònia*.



Posidonia forms into huge accumulations near L'Illot des Porros.

'Posidònia'

Until relatively recently, people were unaware of the name *posidònia oceànica* and tended to call any marine plant species *seaweed*. However, today almost everyone knows that *posidònia* is a fundamental part of marine life in the Mediterranean. It is not seaweed but an underwater plant with roots and flowers. Its biological history is curious, as it was born in the sea, like all life on the planet, later it colonized the land, but even later it returned to the sea. In May of 2006 a specimen of *posidònia* was found in the waters of Formentera that measured eight kilometres long. It was considered the largest living being on Earth. Its age was estimated at 100,000 years, and it grows at a rate of two centimetres per year.

Posidònia forms extensive prairies that are nurseries not just of life but also of soil. It can multiply the area of its substrate between 20 and 50 times. *Posidònia* is to sea floors what forests are to land. It primarily lives in sandy bottoms at a depth of less than 40 metres. It

is the typical image of those water prairies with waving leaves that dance with the motion of the current. These plants' average lifespan is 30 years; for this reason the destruction wrought by sunken boats, manmade sand extractions, pollution and introduced species like *killer seaweed* (*Caulerpa taxifolia*) are extremely serious.

We can tell the importance of its role from the amount of life that teems from these prairies. First of all, its leaves are covered with tiny seaweed that uses it to reach the light, as well as by tiny invertebrates that filter the suspended particles. Inside the prairie, different species of starfish and countless sea urchins take refuge in and feed on this plant. The same holds true of cephalopods such as octopuses and cuttlefish. The octopuses live in holes and the cuttlefish hide among the leaves, near the bottom, adapting their colour in order to camouflage themselves. Both feed on the fauna that visits this ecosystem, including tiny prawns, crabs and small fish. The *posidònia* prairies are there-



fore friendly environments to countless fish who feed on crustaceans, sea urchins, mollusks, worms and the like. This plant, then, serves the twofold purpose of pantry and breeding ground, because many species also reproduce among its leaves. Another of the positive functions of *posidònia* is that it buffers the force of the waves. In this way it contributes doubly to conserving the sand: it both hosts the shelled organisms from which sand is made, and then it prevents sea erosion from taking more sand away from the beaches.

Therefore, it should come as no surprise that right now *posidònia* is a highly prized plant, especially because it is endemic to the Mediterranean. Many efforts are being made to prevent the *posidònia* prairies from deteriorating or being destroyed.

At Son Real you can see three effects of *posidònia*. The most spectacular one consists of the huge accumulations of leaves that cover the rocks or beaches. La Punta des Patró tends to be covered by a considerable layer of this matter. Yet you can also find the characteristic *balls* of dry rhizomes, which the sea has spun around until leaving them with a perfectly spherical shape.

Likewise, when the *posidònia* blossoms, which does not happen every year, its olive-shaped fruit reaches the shores of Son Real, usually between the months of May and June.



The two towers or climbing spots in Son Real.

The alignment towers

One characteristic feature of the Bay of Alcúdia is the **alignment towers**. A total of 14 pairs of these towers were built (on the military maps they appear as “marks”) from Albufera to the Colònia de Sant Pere. They were painted white, numbered and fitted out with red signals. They served for the mining and torpedo exercises of the submarines from the Submarine Weapons Estate that operated from 1941 until 1970. The submersibles navigated through the middle of the bay and approached

he specific points using the alignment system (a position line obtained by superimposing two objects that can be seen from the sea). By aligning two pairs of towers, they could reach a given pre-established position. These constructions are located at regular intervals of 1,240 metres. In turn, every pair of towers is 200 metres away from each other. In the town of Can Picafort, another two of these towers can be seen restored to their original state.



Entrance to the cave across from L'illot des Porros.

The cave across from L'illot des Porros

One of the elements that is most striking in this spot is the cave that opens up in a rocky plateau. It tends to be called la **Cova de davant l'illa des Porros** (the cave across from L'illot des Porros), and before the government bought the estate it was often used by summer *squatters*. This cavity will help you reach the small rocky plateau that rises up behind the beach and has several different points of interest.

Before approaching the fence that marks the property boundary and can be crossed by two *botadors*, take a look at the remains of a **'mur ciclopi'** (a wall built with large slabs of varying sizes) which closes off the space before it. You can see the row of ashlar right on the edge of the pathway.

The fact that there are at least four funerary sites in this area leads us to believe that it was a spot with a high religious value. Perhaps this wall was used to delimit the holy area in front of the tombs.

The cave is an artificial burial cavity. It dates from the pre-Talayotic period and might be as old as 3,500 years. At some later point it was modified considerably, as these funerary caves always follow the same model: a central chamber in an elongated shape, niches on the walls and



Second funerary cave located across from L'Illot des Porros, which is smaller than the previous one.

a very narrow opening, often with an antechamber. In this case, the first part seems to have vanished, as the entrance opens directly onto the chamber. Inside you can also see the remains of the walls that divided it. At the entrance there is an enclosure wall and traces of a type of hinge. The orifice you can see on your left just as you enter is curious. Inside it there are four typical funerary niches carved out of the rock and another smaller niche, probably carved later. The cave is eight metres deep and around three wide.

One of the uses of this grotto was as a coastal lookout point. In a map of lookout towers drawn up by the school of Miguel Bestard in the 17th century, all the lookout towers are marked, and one point is marked on the 'Illas dels Porros'. The same holds true of the famous map by Cardinal Despuig from the 18th century, where there is the sign of a coast guard lookout point here. Bearing in mind that it was a safe refuge for the guards, the most likely

scenario is that the ancient collective tomb was adapted to become a temporary detachment.

In fact, in the 19th century this coast was once again closely watched. When the war between Napoleonic France and England broke out, Spain was an ally of the French at first. There were fears that the British fleet, which had departed Menorca a short time earlier, would disembark on Mallorca. The place where people were sure this disembarkation would take place was right here: the coast of Santa Margalida. Finally, the uprising on the 2nd of May shifted Spain's allegiances, thus removing the British threat.

Before ascending the rocky platform where the cave opening is, continue along the lower pavement. When you reach a jetty right at the end of the wall, the slight elevation recedes a bit. At this entrance you can see a second cave that is much smaller than the first and lacks such a well-defined shape. Archaeologists believe that this cave, too, was used for funerary purposes.



Creu d'en Cobertella dolmen in Roses (Girona).

The megalithic tombs

Usually when we speak about megalithic tombs or dolmens, the image that comes to mind is the typical stone table (*dolmen* means *table* in Breton), that is, a large slab supported by four other slabs. However, on Mallorca this shape does not exist. The megalithic tombs found to date (Son Bauló, S'Aigua Dolça and Son Real) are small and modest. To begin with, they lack the upper slab. They are smaller in size and have no long corridor like the ones in Catalonia. What you can see on Mallorca is a quadrangle of slabs, one of which is perforated. The inside of the funerary chamber was reached through this hole.

Originally megalithic tombs did not look like this either. They were all covered with a mound of earth and stones that turned them into little humps with just the entrance hole sticking out. This might be why so few of them have

been found; there are probably quite a few that are still covered with soil. The stones that were placed in a circle around the monuments were used to contain the mound.

The megalithic tombs were the first architecture to appear in Europe. The megalithic tradition (from *mega* —large—, and *litos* —stone—) spread around the entire continent starting in the Neolithic period, and in many cases, it lasted until the beginning of the Bronze Age. That is, the most ancient dolmens might be as many as 7,000 years old. They were symbolic architecture. The chamber symbolised the space for the deceased individuals, which were still regarded as a magical presence. The perforated slab was the threshold between the worlds of the living and the dead. The land where they were built was considered extremely sacred.



Remains of a megalithic sepulchre, the oldest archaeological monument in Son Real.

The megalithic tomb

To climb to the upper part of the plateau, there are several pathways through the rock that are probably quite ancient. From there you will have magnificent views of the bay and L'illot des Porros in the middle. At around sundown, the interplay of shades of blue, green, ochre and mauve is spectacular.

Here you will find the third funerary monument, a **megalithic tomb** that is right in the line of L'illot des Porros. You have to look closely because, even though it is advertised as a dolmen, it has no roof and solely consists

of a pavement of large stones and several slabs which together form a square-shaped area.

Megalithic tombs are regarded as the oldest monuments built by mankind on Mallorca. They might be up to 4,500 years old. They were used as collective tombs for small communities in the megalithic tradition. This monument was excavated in 2003 by a team of archaeologists led by Lluís Plantalamor. The tomb had already been partly sacked, and nothing of great importance was found, which leads researchers to believe that it was never finished. The material extracted includes pieces with a long-standing history: from pre-Talayotic remains to shards of



The megalithic tomb, the cave and L'illot des Porros islet stand almost in a line.

Greco-Italian ceramics. Fragments of carved stone used as a tool for opening up furrows in the rock where the slabs were anchored were recognized. A shale shard was gathered, which must have been imported from the Iberian Peninsula or Menorca, as this kind of rock is not found on Mallorca. There were no human remains. A pathway joins this site with the last stretch of itinerary 3. If you keep going around 30 metres heading towards Can Picafort, you will pass by a small elevation around 17 metres high over sea level on your left. Approach the highest point and there you will find, although they are hard to spot, the remains of another **funerary monu-**

ment in ruins. Mascaró Passarius has described it as “the ruins of a one-story construction with features similar to those of the necropolis” In fact, what you can make out is a vaguely circular ring of slabs. Its dominant location reveals the symbolic nature of these ruins, even though they have not yet been investigated. Just a few metres further inland you can find a mound of stone blocks and remains of roof tiles, which indicate the existence of a **destroyed hut**. Nearby is the opening of an ancient cistern or reservoir with the top uncovered.



L'Illot des Porros islet takes its name from the wild leek (porro), seen in the foreground.

L'Illot des Porros

From this area you can catch perfect views of **L'Illot des Porros**, which is located straight ahead just 100 metres off the coast. The first thing that will catch your attention is its flat, round shape. It is barely 3,050 square metres in area, and its maximum height is no more than four metres. On the northern part of the islet you can see another smaller reef which was called S'Illotet (The Little Islet) according to Archduke Louis Salvador in his book on Mallorca. There, sea crows tend to perch with their wings open to dry them off in the sun. L'Illot des Porros gets its name from the wild leeks (*porros*) that abound there: most of its surface is rock, with the exception of a small sandy area on the southern side.

It is hard to imagine that this tiny tract of land might have played such an important role in history. In the 1960s, dovetailing with the excavation of La Punta des Fenicis, Miguel Tarradell's team discovered a spectacular religious complex on the islet. It was made up of three large chambers carved into the rock belowground. These chambers were closed by *murs ciclopis* (walls built with large slabs of varying sizes), with stairs carved into the rock to reach them and large columns inside. The impression was mag-

nificent, and the open area and huge stones conveyed a spirit that was at once barbarian yet grandiose. These chambers were much larger than the tombs in the necropolis on La Punta des Fenicis, and in many ways, they are reminiscent of Talayotic sanctuaries. Even though they have always been regarded as tombs, they actually suggest the image of a place of worship that was later turned into funeral grounds. Tarradell stated that these constructions had no counterpart anywhere on the Balearic Islands. During the excavation, a thick layer of ash with the remains of offerings and burials for cremation were found. The lower part of these caves was still masked by the flames. In this, too, they were similar to the sanctuary on La Punta des Patró, which was discovered much later. The human remains appeared shrivelled, probably tied up with rope or fabric, in the fetal position, a feature in common with the funerary deposits from the necropolis on La Punta des Fenicis. The bodies found were subjected to a study by Assumpció Malgosa. A total of 230 individuals were buried between the 4th and 2nd centuries BC. They were of all ages and sexes, although the most common age of death was young adulthood. In height, these individuals were almost as tall as normal adults in the early 20th century. A full 16% of them were brachycephalic



The larger chambers on L'Illot des Porros were destroyed in a storm in 2003.

(a skull that tends to be wider than it is long), which reveals a possible oriental origin, perhaps Punic.

Mascaró Passarius, who participated in the first excavation along with other major figures in archaeology from that time, including William Waldren, recalled. "One of the skeletons exhumed, most likely a woman, carried the skeleton of a tiny baby in her arms. What human drama is concealed here?"

In 1996 the islet was excavated once again. That time an even lower level was revealed, which showed that there had already existed a construction back in the pre-Talayotic period. New burials were also found, including one of a child in the middle of several slabs. The investigation revealed that the chamber located on the left (looking from the land seaward) was the oldest one. The one on the right was built later, and the last one lies between these two. Around them are more burial sites, some of them following the same model of the necropolis in La Punta des Fenicis. The excavation also unearthed a wall that closed off the funeral grounds on the northern side to protect it from the action of the waves.

One question that arises immediately is whether the islet was in fact an islet back in prehistoric times. It is reasonable to posit that it was not. Perhaps the sea has eaten away at a rocky isthmus that joined this point with the land. The necropolis on La Punta des Fenicis is also built

on a promontory and has lost many of its tombs, eroded away by the rising sea level. It would be logical to think that the burials were made at a site that was accessible from land, because otherwise reaching them would have proven quite difficult.

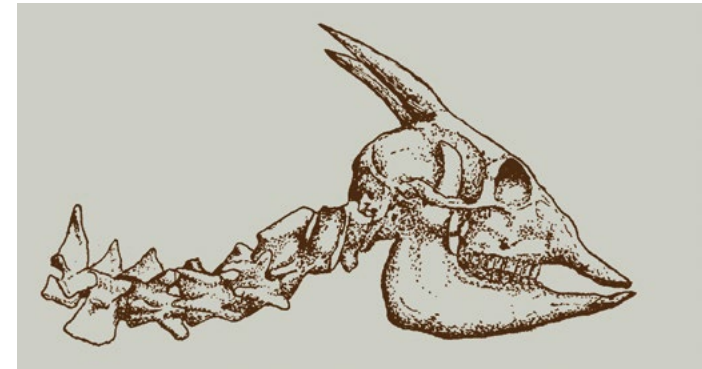
The waters on L'Illet des Porros have teemed with finds. Here, for example, pieces of jet have been found, a mineral that is not found on Mallorca. Spherically-carved stones have also been found measuring around 20 centimetres in diameter. These pieces have been interpreted as catapult projectiles, and many people back the theory (also supported by architect and art critic Gabriel Alomar) that this might have been the place where the Roman troops disembarked in AD 123. Remains from the underwater sites have been found at Son Real, including Roman amphorae. The funerary role of the islet does not end with antiquity. The burials continued there throughout almost the entire Middle Ages. This was because of a tragedy recounted by historian Antoni Mas. In 1348 the first case of the bubonic plague was reported on Mallorca. This was a highly contagious disease caused by the *Yersinia pestis*

bacteria. It caused fever and buboes (hence the name), or ulcerous boils, leading to skin hemorrhages with black and blue suppurations.

This plague got its start in Asia and then spread to India, China and the Near East, leaving millions of dead in its wake. The disease was transmitted via rats and their parasites, and therefore ships were major carriers of the plague. This explains why the Genovese sailors were to blame for its arrival in Europe. The plague attacked Genoa, Venice and Sicily. From there it moved to Marseilles and from that port town to Mallorca. When the first death from the plague took place on Mallorca, the people wanted to bury the corpse as far away as possible, and they chose precisely L'Illet des Porros. However, the town leaders of Santa Margarida protested, fearing that the mortal epidemic would be spread there. This meant that the corpse had to be exhumed, which effectively did cause the disease to be spread. The black plague left L'Illet des Porros, causing the death of half the population of the township of Santa Margalida. One-quarter of the inhabitants of Mallorca died as a result of the plague. Historians believe that

the black plague then moved from Mallorca to Catalonia and Aragon. Therefore, the tiny L'Illet des Porros indirectly caused countless deaths on the Iberian Peninsula.

Yet the islet's dramatic fate does not end there. In 2003 a vicious storm wreaked the usual havoc. The waves beat the northern part of the islet, sweeping away the land and rocks over the funerary chambers, which in turn caused many walls and columns to come tumbling down. After that disaster, the only thing that can be seen is a shapeless pile of stones. As a small compensation, as the storm left the stone in the middle of the islet totally stripped, fossilized hoof prints of the myotragus appeared in the rock. The myotragus was a small goat-like animal that followed its own unique evolutionary pathway on Mallorca before the arrival of mankind. These animals walked along the dunes and left their hoof prints. If it rained immediately and the wind covered their trail, the sand fossilized, retaining the hoof print of the animal. The sandstone, which is simply sand converted into stone, bears the traces of a now extinct animal.



Myotragus balearicus, as drawn by William Waldren.

The myotragus

The history of the myotragus, a goat-like species that underwent a unique evolution because of its isolation until it developed singular features, is a bit totemic. Its extinction due to human activity is actually a lesson in sustainability from prehistoric times.

There are two points in history that would have been impressive to witness. The first was majestic: more than eight million years ago, the Mediterranean dried up. It became a vast salty plain, a negative geography. There were fissures and immense dazzlingly white salt flats. Packs of animals patrolled that sterile desert looking for food. Some goat-like animals found unknown lands, the forested mountains that would later become the Balearic Islands, and remained there.

When the Strait of Gibraltar opened up, the waters of the Atlantic Ocean poured in like a gigantic waterfall. The sea filled up once again, and the species that had



The fossilised footprints of myotragus in the rock on L'illot des Porros.

moved to the islands remained isolated in a closed, insular habitat. They would then embark on a strange evolution.

The second vignette comes much later than that initial one of the goat-like animals over the salt-covered back-drop. What we wouldn't give to have been there when the last myotragus died! Perhaps at the hands of mankind, perhaps from famine and illness, from age or an accident. When its eyes closed, an extremely valuable biological story came to an end. One of our most ancient and emblematic totems was lost, without anyone having written a chronicle about it.

We should mention that in the meantime those goat-like animals that came to the continent had morphed into an outlandish being. Without any predators to threaten it, the myotragus began to lose agility; they turned awkward and chubby. What is more, due to a curious biological law, species that inhabit islands tend to shrink, to become dwarves. It became a mini-goat-like animal, which in turn ended up becoming a myotragus, literally

a goat-rat (*cabra-rata* as it is called in local lore) just 60 centimetres tall.

The lack of predatory stress fostered the growth of the species until unsupportable extremes. Apparently so many myotragus arrived on Mallorca that they could hardly find enough food to survive. Many of them were tiny and ill. Since there was little food, they must have had to specialize in very difficult foods, like bark and moss. This is how the myotragus came to lose its peripheral vision to concentrate on frontal vision so it could find and gnaw on anything edible. Archaeologists believed for some time that the skulls of the myotragus, with their dented antlers, revealed human action. That was surprising because the period yielded from Carbon-14 dating pointed to their being quite ancient, around 10,000 years ago, until it was discovered that it was the myotragus themselves who gnawed on the skulls of their dead fellows in the pursuit of vitamins and minerals. The celebrated V-shaped incisions had become a type of desperate vampirism.

The first humans to reach Mallorca must have been fairly

desperate themselves to have embarked on an adventure of this scope. Fleeing from a place where they could not subsist, they hit the jackpot because on Mallorca they would find an overpopulation of fat, succulent, carefree myotragus that were easy to hunt.

Perhaps we will never know why the depopulation of the myotragus came about, but you do not have to be a Nobel prize winner to suspect that massive hunting by groups of humans might have been at least a triggering factor. One clear night, in front of a cave or hut, some pre-Talayotic peasant devoured the last myotragus leg. He did not know he was the cause of the extinction of an autochthonous species that can never be recovered.

Ses Pedreres (The Quarries)

Keep following coastal pathway in the same direction as you set out. In this area there are several points of interest. You will see a round promontory that juts out into the sea, located around the height of the angle of the fence. There, around six metres along the pathway to the sea, is the **base of a wall** that made a corner. It is quite wide and might belong to some of the defense facilities that were built in this region from the Middle Ages until the 19th century. Very close by, although difficult to make out because of the dune vegetation, there is a **cist**, a burial in the sand marked with small stones. For the time being we do not know how old it is, although this type of tomb was common during the age of Byzantine domination (around the 6th century AD).

You are now entering an extensive area of **sandstone quarries**, the most important ones in Son Real. It should come as no surprise that these quarries were set up near the sea because it was easier and cheaper to transport the blocks by boat than the cart. However, you can still



Former pathway with wheel ruts in the stone.

see the remains of an old path in the area that skirts the fence and shows the passage of carts over many years. The first quarry is small and located near the corner of the fence. When you reach the coast, turn westward, and there you'll find the first **ancient pathway** with the mark of the wheel ruts on the rock. We are not sure how old these wheel ruts are, although it is surprising that they are not always the same size, as if what travelled here were not carts with wheels and axels but a stretch-

er-type vehicle with two trunks that were dragged along the ground. This would explain the notable difference in width depending on the part of the pathway. This 20-metre stretch reminds us of the transport along this coast, which then basked in solitude, and of men who looked for stones or *seaweed*. The quarries extend along the edge of the sea and further inland. Right on the coast they form a fantastical landscape of sloped planes and zigzag cuts. Walking towards the woods you can see



The largest stones in Son Real are near the sea.

more deforested areas with the mark of the stonecutter's hammer every centimeter. This quarry area is quite picturesque due to the variety of shapes, unexpected nooks and the evocation of another era when life was much harsher. These quarries, which stopped being mined upon the outbreak of the Civil War, might have been started taking advantage of the quarries that were used to build the necropolis on La Punta des Fenicis.

Close-up of one corner of the quarries.





The quarries

The world of the stonecutters lasted from the remotest antiquity until the 1950s. At that time, the introduction of machinery put a sudden end to a trade and a manual tradition. Places like Muro, Petra and S'Arenal were famous for the large quarries that employed many families. Since the quarrying was manual, the cuts made in the rock were irregular. The stonecutters looked for the best veins of sandstone, and if they found one they changed direction. In contrast, mechanical mining leaves perfectly regular plains, gaps that resemble huge amphitheaters which, as a matter of fact, have been used as such in places like Ciutadella.

A quarry is a veritable display of human ingenuity. The stonecutters were confronted with the land, the inside of which they would not guess, and they only had their own strength and tools. There tends to be a layer of soil and useless debris over sandstone; therefore, they tried to directly attack the good veins in places where it cropped out on the side or mine the rock underground.

We should remember that many times the best sandstone is found at greater depths. For this reason, the stonecutters gradually removed layers as they got closer

to the best sandstone. In some places you can see that the mining was interrupted or shifted in another direction. Sometimes this was because veins started to yield calcareous stone, which diminished the quality of the sandstone. A stonecutter had to guess at the quality of the stone from its sound, which warned about overly fragile stone. This was called “listening to the stone” (*escoltar sa pedra*) or “making the stone sing” (*fer cantar sa pedra*).

A fundamental piece in the puzzle was the roller, which enabled the pieces to be hoisted up from a certain depth using rope. This explains the existence of extremely deep quarries which are sometimes very difficult to descend. Thanks to this system, the stones could be lifted. In order to break the stone, the stonecutters mainly used a stonecutter’s hammer, a type of reinforced pickaxe with two tips. They also used other tools such as cleavers, a type of hatchet made to even out the blocks; picks or mallets; sledgehammers, which were half-mallet and half-hammer; levers, iron bars to loosen the block; hoes to gather up the sandy remains; and tinplates or wedges. The stone mining system was as follows. First of all, the

stonecutters had to choose the land, remove a layer of soil, smooth out any rockjutting out and leave everything ready. Then came the stage of tracing the grooves with the hammer to mark the size of the future blocks. The length and width of the future stone blocks were traced, and in one corner the slab was sacrificed using a mallet. Taking advantage of this hole, the size of the first stone block was outlined. Then the wedges were inserted, and very careful it was lifted using the lever. This was a difficult operation that required experience to know how far to force the rock without breaking the block.

In some quarries you can see stairways that were used to manually lift out the rock and rotate the sandstone pieces. This was a hard job; the stonecutters were exposed to the rigors of the weather and often far from the settlement. This meant either long walks or the building of huts where the stonecutters could stay while working at the quarry.



Sa Coveta, a funeral burial cave.

Sa Coveta

At the same level as the pathway, in the quarry zone, you can find a cave carved out of the rock. This is known as Sa Coveta (The Little Cave) or **Cova de Ses Pedreres** (The Quarry Cave), and it is also a funerary construction. The same team that excavated the megalithic tomb also studied this monument. It is considered a small hypogeum measuring less than three metres on either side. The archaeologists highlight the fact that it is circular in shape, and they date it from approximately 4,000 years ago, in pre-Talayotic times. The most striking aspect of this cave is the carving on the entrance and the side wall that marked it.

Follow the pathway towards Can Picafort, passing by more quarries on your left and a rocky coastline with small sandy deposits on your right. You will come upon yet another stretch of the **ancient road** with wheel ruts around 15 metres long. On the left, a tiny quarry looks like a crater in the ground. These tiny quarries are often the sites where just enough rock was mined to build a hut or small house. In S'Arenal, the land of quarries, the stonecutters would dig out a small quarry to build their home and then use the cavity as a cistern.



Homer at Son Real

Here, on Son Real, among fig groves, pine groves, dunes that were consolidated centuries ago, sandstone quarries and immense mounds or *seaweed*, there still survives one of the most intriguing mysteries from prehistoric Mallorca. Toni Barceló, who lived on the estate for over 40 years, would recall how Llorenç Vanrell, Can Picafort's parish priest, used to raise his index finger to his lips and say "Look. You're in a sacred place."

Vanrell was a sturdy, jovial fellow. He died in 2002 at the age of 98. He walked with long strides, always with his umbrella in hand. He was the kind of chaplain who loved ancient ruins and the past. Taking advantage of his strolls, he would often visit the coastal area that Joan Verger, the chaplain in Santa Margalida and 18th century historian, had called La Punta des Fenicis (Phoenician Point). In an exercise in imagination quite common in our times, Verger upheld that the Carthaginians had tried to invade Mallorca right in that very spot. After disembarking, they built towers and defenses in their quest to occupy the island. However, fierce, bellicose slingshot wielders prevailed and made them flee. There, on La Punta des

Fenicis, were the remains of those constructions. The promontory had traditionally been called Sa Torreta (The Little Tower), which is how it appears on Cardinal Despuig's map from 1785. Verger single-handedly transformed that tower, a reference to the tombs that are half-buried there, into a picturesque cemetery of the Phoenicians. Llorenç Vanrell, who had read Verger, would stroll among the sand deposits and dunes, where he could spot very skillfully carved blocks, suggesting rounded or rectangular shapes. Some residents of Santa Margalida had heard the legends about the hidden treasures and tombs, and sometimes they came and dug a bit in the hunt for riches, as did the idle tourists in the idle days of summer. Those sackings drew his attention, and he alerted the team that in the late 1950s had excavated nearby Pollentia to what was happening.

That is how a group of archaeologists led by Miguel Tarradell began the excavation at La Punta des Fenicis. The diggers brought to light tiny tower-shaped structures, tombs with sometimes two niches carved out of the sandstone. The blocks, numbered by construction, gathered in the sand. In one corner there were tens of bones from those prehistoric people. It was the violated secret of the tomb. The mystery of the past. Tarradell's ex-

cavations snuffed out the myth of the Phoenicians. What appeared instead was a necropolis from the Talayotic period, connected with other funerary sites like the chambers excavated on L'Illot des Porros, the cave across from L'Illot des Porros, the megalithic tomb nearby and surely other burial sites that are lost today. "A sacred place". Vanrell was right. That zone had been a sacred place since time immemorial. Tarradell published a brief study on the excavation, and the results were later analyzed by Jaume Coll. Thirty years passed until, in a painstaking reconstruction of the report on the excavations and analysis of the materials, Jordi Hernández published the first comprehensive study of Son Real (*Son Real. Necropolis talayótica de la edad del Hierro* [Son Real. An Iron Age Talayotic Necropolis]. "Arqueomediterrània 3 I and II". Barcelona, 1998). Archaeological research culminating in 2021.

Most of the original necropolis has vanished through action of the waves. Yet there is something special here, a cohesion, a symbolic intentionality that combines with the enormity of the landscape, in the middle of a still-virgin coastline peppered with dunes and pine groves. On one side, the Victòria mountains and the westernmost point of the Bay of Alcúdia, on the other, the bulk of Cap de Ferrutx. The landscape has special aerodynamics, as if

the force lines that organize this scene joined precisely over the cemetery. As if you could throw it with all its invisible force towards the heights of the world of the dead. The historical problem it poses is fascinating. What was that huge necropolis doing next to the sea? What did it symbolize? Why is there no similar one on all of Mallorca or Menorca? How can we explain its exceptional nature? Was it a cemetery of kings?

The oldest materials that appeared in the tombs date back to the centuries of Homer, and the constructions from the first phase have been dated from between the 7th and 6th centuries BC. Back then, monumental tombs were built for warriors, who were buried with their weapons and even with animals like dogs and horses. There are few of these tombs, yet they are unique and skillfully built. Those heroes must have had their own *epos*; their own legend, their own prestige and charisma. They attracted later generations as well. Just like in the first Christian cemeteries, whoever could be buried near saints and bishops were considered fortunate. Somehow, they were *infected* by their neighbours. However, Son Real was a cemetery of hierarchy. The number of people buried is extremely low given the time span it encompasses. This is a clear indication that only the chieftains and their fami-



lies were worthy of occupying this prime line of deceased people. Their survival was ensured with a monument: warrior castes probably turned into heroes in popular memory, founders of lineages. They were men from an archaic world, with settlements and tower-shaped monuments (the talayots) that served more to represent the power and honor of the chieftains than to defend. The assets were land and livestock. These hierarchs were bedecked with bronze objects, oftentimes heavy, awkward ornaments. They brandished huge swords that were more symbolic than functional. They must have resembled the Sardinian *bronzetti*, with long capes, chieftains' staffs, and magical tinkling objects (tintinabulae and little bells).

The second chronological phase reveals the extent of this privilege and corresponds to a time when Talayotic society was gradually abandoning the heroic and warrior model to become consolidated into an aristocratic ranking system. The appearance of the first seafaring merchants changed the archaic Talayotic society. Now they could purchase products from abroad, but to do so they had to produce a surplus and save it. The governing families gained in wealth and fame with this earliest trade. In this phase, dated from the 5th century BC, they aban-

doned the tower-shaped tombs from the first stage and built the so-called *micronavetes* or apsidal-shaped tombs that are reminiscent of the Talayotic sanctuaries that were located on the outskirts of the settlements and in holy places. Some historians believe that this phase can no longer be considered Talayotic, calling it the post-Talayotic or Balearic period.

In the northern area of the archaeological site, there is another type of grave dating back to the same period as the *micronavetas*. It is round or oval shaped, and half-dug into the sand so that it juts out from the ground a little. The pit of these graves is usually covered with a stone and, inside, a single skeleton of an adult male has always been found.

Finally, the tombs evolved towards simpler and more summary shapes. They are square and at times nestled in places that make use of the interstices between the larger tombs. They belong to the last period that extends between the 4th and 3rd centuries BC. After that, the necropolis at La Punta des Fenicis seems to have been abandoned. The burials were then shifted to L'Illot des Porros.

Try to imagine those burials in the heroic period. When the procession accompanied the deceased person,

dressed in his pomp and signs of power, all along the dunes. The music, chants, lamentations... and right there by the sea, which seems like a metaphysical backdrop. The dead person was prepared for their last dwelling place, placed inside one of these *towers of the dead*. Artificially shrunken and tied up with ropes, perhaps as a cautionary measure against potential vengeance in the afterlife, their most prized *possessions* (tubes with hair, bronze spirals, ornaments, daggers, necklaces, lead plates, shells, amulets) were placed with them, as was a receptacle holding food: milk or honey for eternity. Perhaps the openings in some of the tombs were *windows for the dead* to give them more food, offerings to placate the ancestors' souls.

And after the ceremony, solitude. The sound of the sea. Darkness. The tomb. There is a kind of aura like an intangible halo that hovers over these funerary structures. Sometimes we can sense something there, a content, a myth. Yet we lack any proof, at least direct proof. We can only grasp this city of the dead comparatively.

It's as easy to read as Homer.

Somehow the world evoked in *The Odyssey*, and especially in *The Iliad*, show certain parallels with the ancient Talayotic world. The Talayots lived in settlements around

a lordly manor that was owned by the chieftain, warrior and owner. It is somewhat similar to the kingdom in *The Odyssey*, for example, except that instead of a palace with *magaron* the slingshot wielders clustered in stone towers surrounded by smaller constructions. The scale was much smaller, and so were the economic possibilities. Yet there is an echo of that Mycenaean culture reinvented by Homer (who lived 400 years after the deeds that he narrates in his poems) on prehistoric Mallorca. And naturally, in the realm of funeral ceremonies the keys are the same. By chance in *The Iliad* Homer describes the cremation ceremonies with a great deal of detail, believing that his Mycenaean ancestors engaged in this practice. However, archaeology has shown that the Mycenaean dead were buried, while later, in Homer's times, cremation was indeed practiced.

Greek has a revealing word to help us understand the meaning of this cemetery of heroes: *kleos*. It meant a mixture of prestige, renown, historical immortality, or perhaps what we understand by glory and fame. That is, it is a kind of replacement for immortality after death via memory and the mark left in one's community.

To the Greeks, the men who managed to become the subject of a song or poem must have achieved *kleos*. It is like



the prize for a glorious existence. In his book *The Tragedy of Hector*, the scholar James M. Redfield gives us the precise key: “*Kleos* is especially associated with the grave. The society ensures the memory of the dead person by creating for him a monument that will perpetuate his name and remind men to tell his story. Therefore, the dead person will not be completely annihilated, and a man’s *kleos* is somehow compensation for his own destruction”.

In certain cases, like heroes, the tomb has a twofold purpose. First, it participates in the rites of passage to the afterlife, without which the person’s soul would wander aimlessly for eternity. Secondly, it ensures this *kleos* or glorious memory, which is like a kind of historical and poetic immortality. The man becomes a myth.

It should come as no surprise that *The Iliad* is full of threats and promises to leave the corpse of the enemy to the dogs, instead of burying it and giving it back to its family members. This was the worst fate possible. The most terrible threat. Because the warrior could arm himself with bravery, fight, try to be effective and valiant in combat, but once dead, how could he ensure that the rites needed to join the community of the dead would be performed?

The Iliad has conveyed to us the poignant plea of young Patroclus, as now dead he appears in his friend Achilles’

dreams. He anxiously begs him: “Bury me as soon as you can, because I might pass through the doors to Hades. The souls reject me from afar, the shadows of the dead, and they do not let me mingle beyond the river, rather I have to wander here around the mansion with the vast doors to Hades. Lend me your hand, I beg of you weeping, as I will not go back to Hades after you have let me participate in the fire!” (C. XXIII. 75)

The dead person who had no rites or funerals was twice dead. Not only did they lose their earthly life, but they also lost their afterlife. They became a type of anguished, lost, spectral being. What a horrible fate!

So we can understand the reason behind this effort of stone and architecture. The reason behind the zeal to ensure that the heroes (the only ones who seem to have been worthy of hoping for immortality, as even death had its classes) completed their cycle of transit. The image of the tomb as part of this ritual is also often mentioned in *The Iliad*. When Hector speaks with the enemy and suggests the possibility that the warrior might face death at his hands, he seems to be referring directly to Son Real: “As soon as I have removed his weapons, I will take them to the holy Ilion and hang them in the temple of Apollo, the archer, yet I will return the corpse to the

ships well-outfitted with benches for the oarsmen so that the hairy-faced Achaean can built him a mound near the great Hellespont. And one day a man of the future, when sailing through the wine-coloured sea with a ship with many rows of oarsmen, will say: ‘This grave is for a man who died years ago, whose life the illustrious Hector took while he fought valiantly Thus will someone speak one day, and my fame will never die’ (C.VII, 75) *Kleos* is directly related to the grave and the mound marking it. When Achilles finishes depositing Patroclus’ bones in a golden urn, he asks his companions to be buried with his friend: “As for the grave, I ask you to make me one that is not too big yet worthy enough. Later on, those of you who remain after me on the many-oared ships, build one of the most spacious and tallest ones.” (C. XXIII, 235)

The tombs at Son Real are small towers that serve the same purpose as the gigantic mounds in *The Iliad*. The Talayotic people also practiced burials that were then covered with tall stone mounds. It was a universal language. Stone, which is eternal, ensures the survival of the *kleos*. And the *kleos* is history.

Because ancient man viewed human life as a tale. It was a story to be narrated. For this reason, the heroes, challenging time, wanted a monument on par with their

feats, one that would serve as the immortal book telling their legend. The men who were buried in the first phase of Son Real were chieftains and warriors. They must have had a name, a lineage, a story. People would repeat their gestures or perhaps sing songs, and every time they were remembered they would live a little longer. They would escape from death and oblivion.

Son Real was the cemetery of our own Odysseus, Achilles, Agamemnon, Hector and Priam. Yet unfortunately, their bones ended up in faraway universities where they rest in cardboard boxes, or they have disappeared. Their memory has been lost; we know nothing about them.

Yet their *kleos* has not perished thanks to this stunning landscape of adeptly-carved stones and long shadows at sundown, in a minute city of the dead that has survived the passage of the centuries and remains there, telling us about the power and majesty of men we will never know.



The necropolis at La Punta des Fenicis is a small city built for the dead.

The necropolis at La Punta des Fenicis

On this stretch of the pathway, La **Punta des Fenicis** lies in front of you. On the left, you can see the gate where itineraries 3 and 4 end. La Punta des Fenicis is a triangular promontory that juts out around 600 metres into the sea. It is totally occupied by a prehistoric necropolis that is unquestionably the most valuable archaeological monument on Son Real. From this part of the pathway you can see the damage caused by recent storms that have worn away at the easternmost part of the tombs, even leaving human remains exposed.

It is a funerary complex that resembles something similar to a miniature city on the sea. It measures 800 square metres, and around 100 tombs have been pinpointed there. The tomb buildings on La Punta des Fenicis look like buildings from the Talayotic period, yet on a smaller scale. They were originally covered with stone slabs and probably had some kind of offering or cultural sign outside. This site must have been considered extremely magical or religious. Back then the dead people were feared as an active presence; they kept protecting the

community, and for this reason they had to be cared for and honored.

As becomes clear at first sight, not all the buildings follow the same pattern. In fact, we can distinguish **four different types of tombs**. The oldest ones have a square, rectangular or circular layout, and the walls are very skilfully finished. The one that is considered the oldest is Tomb 2. You can recognize it because it is the circular one closest to the land side of the promontory. Around it you can see other tombs from this original nucleus, also circular, square and rectangular and extremely elongated (like Tomb 5, the last one in the row of three circular tombs). This first phase has been dated between the 7th and 6th centuries BC, and they use materials that date from even earlier. Therefore, this was a time when the Iberian culture was just getting started on the peninsula, one century after Rome was founded and the time when Homer lived: the heroic age.

The second tomb pattern is easy to recognize. They are the so-called *micronavetes* or miniature sanctuaries. The tombs have a round apse and a straight wall on the other end, resembling the shape of a ship. It is the same layout

as the Menorcan funerary *navetes* (which are much larger) and the Talayotic sanctuaries. They probably meant to evoke these buildings of worship. They date from the 6th and 5th century BC when external influence began to influence proto-historic Mallorca, especially from Punic Ibiza. This period corresponds to the heyday of classical Greece.

The third type of grave belongs to the same era. These graves are oval or round in shape, and they are half-buried in the sand, with a stone cover.

The forth variant consists of less spectacular tombs: the majority of them are square-shaped, simple and sometimes designed simply to make use of the spaces between other monuments. This is the end of the necropolis, dated between the 4th and 3rd centuries BC. At that time, the world was undergoing upheaval from Alexander the Great and the Punic Wars.

The necropolis at La Punta des Fenicis is, then, a synthesis of Mallorca's prehistory. Here we can find everything from large-scale, symbolic architecture to the simplest and most functional of buildings.

The first thing that visitors ask is what those well-built

tombs contained. Who was buried there? We still cannot give a detailed answer, but we do have some partial facts that help us to sketch a portrait of the denizens of these tombs.

In terms of the human remains, studies of them have yielded interesting results. They apparently belong to upper-crust individuals, members of a leading class. We can see this from the slender bones and the lack of signs of prolonged muscular effort. In addition, just over 400 individuals are buried there. Taking into account that the necropolis was used for five centuries, this is quite a small number. In fact, in Talayotic culture monumental burials were apparently only for aristocrats, while nobody cared where the bones of the average person ended up.

Among the corpses studied, there are more men (44%) than women (37%) and children (2%). This might result from the belief that Talayotic society had a permanent shortage of females, as revealed by certain classical authors who claimed that female slaves could cost up to four times the price of male slaves.

In terms of their age, the life expectancy was just over

36 years. Individuals who reached the age of 50 are rare. The excavation revealed that trepanation was a common practice; that is, the skulls were perforated with an abrasive object. In some cases, this operation had been performed while the person was still alive, judging from the fact that the bone had healed. Other times, up to seven trepanations were performed after death. Even though it is a mystery, perhaps this was a primitive therapeutic practice for severe headaches, or perhaps the treatment had magical or religious purposes.

What did the tombs contain? As can be readily seen, many of them had two pits or grooves carved into the rock which might have been used to place bones from previous burials. The bodies were placed in a very forced position, tied up so that they were shrunken. The reason might have been a ritual custom (many primitive peoples are afraid that the dead will come back to life, as Sigmund Freud discusses in his *Totem and Taboo*), or perhaps it was a way of saving space inside the tomb.

The materials found in all the tombs do not match with the myth of jewels and treasures. Talayotic culture was poor in resources, and the people went to the afterlife



The series of funerary monuments are made up of different types of structures of round, square, apsidal and irregular designs.

with their prestigious objects and offerings such as daggers, swords, spear tips, blades, axes, studs and chisels. With regard to the personal effects, there were a host of rings, bracelets, spirals that were used as hair slides and a buckle or safety pin bearing the figure of a bird. Another common symbolic item in the Talayotic world whose purpose is uncertain is decorated iron plates. Other metal disks might have been used to make music, as they were hung on a rod. Some objects that were only found in this necropolis

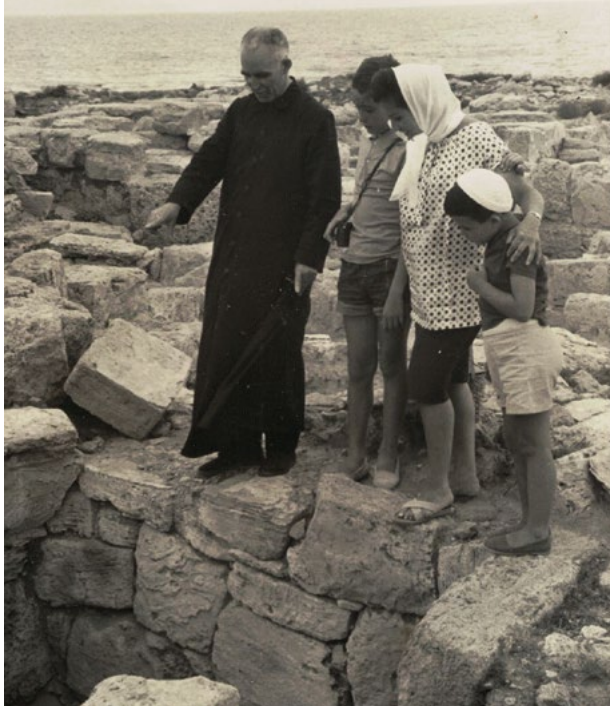
and are quite enigmatic include the so-called *taps* (lids). These are pieces of a bovine femur carved into the shape of a bottle lid. Their exact use is unknown. A total of 80 of them have been found, along with ceramic shards, oil lamps, faience beads, trinkets and even shells and snails. If you would like to walk among the tombs, start with the circular ones. The first one looking west (on your right as you look seaward) is the aforementioned **Tomb 2**, the oldest one. This tomb held one of the skulls that had undergone trepanation while still alive. The circular tomb



A man with an injury caused by a stone projectile was buried in Tomb 1.

nearby (to the left) is **Tomb 1**, which contained several different whole skeletons. The skull of one of them showed an injury caused by a small, round object, perhaps a projectile from a slingshot. However, the injured person apparently recovered. Near this tomb, heading landward, you can see **Tomb 73**, which is one of the few that still has a door. In front of Tombs 1 and 2 you can see another smaller tomb in the shape of a *micronaveta*. This is **Tomb 4**, and it is interesting because it yielded a skull that showed abra-

sion from having been rubbed by a sharp object. Paleopathologists interpret this as a fall among sharp rocks. The same skull also had a blow from a metallic object against the teeth. Yet the person evidently lived some time longer. The offerings included oyster shells, other shells and a cuttlefish shell. Heading further seaward you can see another interesting tomb. This is called **Tomb 5**. It has an extremely elongated rectangular shape and still has some of the roof slabs. Its monumentality was on par with the person buried in-



Llorenç Vanrell, the person who promoted the excavations, in 1961.

side it. Here a warrior was buried with his short sword. His dog was also sacrificed to accompany his owner on his final journey, and an offering of shells was also discovered. In this cluster closest to the path, **Tomb 67** is also worth seeing. It is located near the last three circular tombs (the most advanced one). It is square-shaped and has two very well-wrought vertical openings. Here two skulls and a goat hoof were found. They were also warriors, as the sheath of another sword, fragments from the blade, a bracelet and a spear tip were found in the tomb. Parallel but a little closer to land you can see another square structure: **Tomb 68**. Here another renowned war-



Tomb 67 contained two skulls accompanied by remains of weapons.

rior was buried, as a horse was sacrificed to accompany his passage to the afterlife. He carried his sword and a spear tip. The *navetiforme* tomb that is adjacent to this tomb to the east (right) is **Tomb 69**. The skull that was found there showed a severe cranial injury. The aggressor stood in front of the victim and hit him vertically from above with a metallic object. Despite the seriousness of the wound, this warrior recovered. As we can see, the lives of many of the hierarchs buried here was quite tumultuous. Solid proof of this is **Tomb 88**. To find it you have to go in front of Tomb 2, the first circular structure (the east-



The spectacular Tomb 5 held a warrior, who was buried with a dog.

ern-most one). There you will see a *navetiforme* tomb closer to you, and on the right a row of not very monumental tombs attached to each other. The second one, counting from the land side, is Tomb 88. The story it contains is fascinating. Here there rested a man more than 50 years old who therefore had special status, as we can guess from his having reached such an unusual age. Further proof of his importance is a decorated iron plate that was deposited as a funeral offering. Nevertheless, this man met a tragic end. Dr Domingo Campillo, the paleopathologist who studied the skulls found at Son Real, established the exact sequence of his death. His aggressor

hit him twice with a sword on either side of his head, and finally finished him off with a third blow. As you leave the nucleus of the three circular tombs, you can clearly see the group of tombs from the last phase on your right. All of them are square-shaped and attached to each other. If you walk around La Punta des Fenicis, you can see on the side several grooves revealed by the sea which belonged to tombs that have since been destroyed by the water. In the bend on the western part of La Punta des Fenicis, there is a tiny sand beach, one of the loveliest spots along this coast.



Punta des Fenicis necropolis, in the foreground, and the town of Can Picafort in the background.

Es Cremat

Keep heading towards Can Picafort. On the left and right of the fence to the estate there is a small **quarry**. The coastline is rocky, stripped by the waves, revealing sand deposits afterward. Go past two small promontories and you will see that the fence turns off at an angle with a *botador* for climbing it. This is the beginning of the stretch of private property that interrupts the Son Real estate; it lasts 300 metres from fence to fence. In this area you can once again see signs of the passage of carts, as well as a rocky plateau on your left in a vaguely semicircular shape. The cove that begins here, which is mostly rocky, is called **Cala S'Arralot**. You will soon come upon the fence to the estate again with two more *botadors*. The first one lets you enter the estate to discover the area known as **Es Cremat** (The Burned Area). The toponym refers to a fire that began on the other side of the motorway and set fire



The coast close to Son Bauló.

to the fur of a rabbit which, when it crossed the asphalt running, carried the flames over to this side. As a result of the disaster, this area was severely damaged. Today you can mainly see scrubland and a few scattered saplings. The private parcel and the part of the estate on the other side were also levelled by the fire. This area does not hold a great deal of interest, but there are several curious spots. Take the first pathway that you see after the *botador*. Here in the springtime you can find numerous orchids, an endangered species that grows

in sandy clearings like this one. The pathway goes up around 500 metres and later joins up with the stretch of the boundary fence. Here on the right you can see a small elevation around 30 metres tall. At its peak, which is thickly covered by vegetation, there are still a few abandoned **quarries**. Following the pathway, you can soon see on your right the ruins of a **hut**, most likely related to this quarry. This part of Son Real is typical scrubland from where you can see the sea horizon behind a barrier of green and

ochre tones. If you keep walking towards the forest you will come to a pathway that leads to the motorway. This is not a highly recommended route during the hottest months.

Na Patana

Go back to the coast. You will pass by another point and now see the last part of the Son Real coastline. In this area countless objects wash up after the storms, ranging from

bottles to plastic containers and even shoes and unexpected items like dolls' heads. It also leaves dead animals like dolphins and turtles. The trunks and wood debris take on a special quality after their journey through the sea, as they are left bleached and smooth with a very characteristic feel. You will now enter the last beach, which is often used by tourists staying in Can Picafort since it is quite close by. This is the starting point of the route along the stream, near a sign indicating this. You can spot another tiny **quarry** on the edge of the sea, and then you



A cache of rifles in Na Patana.

reach the Na Patana promontory. The most interesting part of it is the military **bunker** that still keeps watch over this stretch of the coastline. It still has a door with an iron plate and two side loopholes on the western and eastern sides for defending this area from possible disembarkations. Both Can Picafort and Son Serra de

Marina have similar military constructions. You are now entering a stretch of dunes, behind which there is a rocky abutment and after that the outlet of **Son Bauló stream**. On the other side is the tourist nucleus of Can Picafort, a world utterly different than the one you have just travelled through.



The Tamarit Line

One little-known part of the assets of Son Real are the military constructions. The Na Patana rifle cache was part of what was called in its day the Tamarit Line. Starting in 1933, when Franco was the commander of the Balearic Islands, plans were drawn up to prevent a hypothetical landing on the islands. In 1939 a system was designed based on two lines of defence: a first line on the coast to avoid disembarkations, and a second one further inland to neutralise military incursions. All of this was designed with points called CRs (resistance centres), some of which were built for that purpose, while others used pre-existing caves or quarries.

In 1943 a plan directed by Colonel Ricardo Fernández de Tamarit was carried out, which was dubbed the Tamarit Line. The idea was to build rifle caches in strategic spots covering the entire coastline. This goal came upon the problem of the serious shortage of construction materials that the islands suffered from in the post-war period. Some of these fortifications were made from cement, but others were made of mortar and sandstone, such as the one in Na Patana. All told there were around 150

CRs which, at some points along the coast, actually made a formidable line of defence. Thus, it was that 47 rifle caches were strung between S'Estelella and Cap de Salines.

These defences remained in place until just about the 1970s, when the last one was built in Alcúdia. In fact, the existence of military buildings conditioned some of the tourist projects, which were totally pro-development back in the 1960s.

A rifle cache like the one in Na Patana has walls 1.5 metres thick in the part that would be exposed to an attack. Its location was planned so that there was no possibility for evacuation, and it had to be surrounded by loops of razor wire and minefields. It has one loophole per weapon and axis and housing for between four and eight soldiers with water and victuals. The ammunition was kept under the weapons landing, it was closed with hermetically sealed metal doors and it had a ventilation duct.



4. The Stream



Rocky cliffs at the outlet of the stream.

Son Bauló stream

To visit the environs of **Son Bauló stream** you have two possibilities. The simpler one is to leave from Can Picafort, its outlet. If you take this route way, you will reach the pathway in just a few minutes and continue walking parallel to the course of this waterway, which is a route measuring 1.5 kilometres long. To reach the stream from the Son Real houses, your best bet is to go to the coast and head towards the outlet of the stream (this means

walking from the end of the L'Illot des Porros pathway to Can Picafort: approximately two kilometres, plus another 1.5 walking along the stream). If you leave from Can Picafort, you have to go to the easternmost part of this tourist town until you reach the Son Bauló beach. Right there, next to the hotels and tourist facilities, you will see a frontier between two opposite worlds. The stream separates the urban fabric of Can Picafort from the forest. On the water, numerous ducks and other aquatic birds fraternise with the tourists, who feed and take pictures of them. In

the event of huge torrents of water, the stream can even break out onto the beach and pour into the sea. But the most common scene is a sand barrier at the outlet, which turns the end of the stream into an immobile **marsh**. Therefore, it is a wetlands ecosystem, with plants endemic to this environment and plentiful fauna. Pay close attention to the small **cliffs** that close off the last part of the stream. They are the only remnants of a fossil landscape. In many spots along the coastline of Mallorca, the streams end in the middle of rocky walls like this one,

which were used in times past as a refuge, and even to carve out burial caves. Therefore, you can imagine that before tourism, which here only dates back to the 1950s, what you would have seen was a pool surrounded by rushes with a lake and low rock walls. Son Bauló stream starts near the Sa Dragonera estate in Santa Margalida, and it reaches the coast after running for about six kilometres. After crossing the stream heading east, you will immediately come upon a bend in the pathway. After that another



Close-up of low cliffs at the mouth of the torrent.

Next to the torrent, there is a big pine grove.

A dune area near Son Bauló stream.



er pathway leads inland. Above, you will see a rocky plain around ten metres high that you have to reach. To get there, there is a fairly well-travelled sand path that leads towards the forest.

This route is heavily traversed by horseback riders, who have opened up new trails among the dunes. In this first stretch, what most stands out are the large pine trees, almost all of them bent over because of the force of the northerly wind. Throughout the entire itinerary, you will see the effects of the catastrophic storm from 2001 in the form of many destroyed pine trees. The ones that were salvaged at times make extremely lovely stands with their strangely-shaped trunks forming a type of umbrella to shade you from the sun in the summer months.

On the left you can see the fence that marks the boundary of Son Real property, which has two wooden steps, also called *botadors*, that you will not use on this first stretch. Keep going straight ahead until the pathway takes you to a **gateway with a barrier and 'botador' step**. Here is where you will enter the Son Real estate.

You will walk through a forested landscape in which several cypress trees stand out because of their dark colour and their leaves. On the left is a tree-covered hillock, while on the right among the pines you will be able to make out the hotels and buildings of Son Bauló. The two worlds stand in total contrast to each other.

Around 200 metres after entering the estate you will find another botador on your right. Just 50 metres ahead, if you look to the left you will see a pile of earth. If you draw closer you will discover a small surface **quarry**, one of the veins that was mined in this area. If you venture among the vegetation until the highest point, you will find an excavated cavity in the rock with an opening on the upper part. Inside this type of manmade cave there tend to be folding chairs, hammocks and even stones used as tables. This is a den that was traditionally used as a hiding place. Just a few metres away, other ancient quarries took advantage of the places where rock cropped out, and they have remained as concave areas half-hidden by the vegetation. You are in one of the secret spots of Son Real.



Go back to the pathway and keep going ahead. Pass by a turn-off to the left, which would lead you to the Es Cremat scrubland area. After passing by two esplanades, an ancient stone wall runs up to the pathway. Around 300 metres ahead you will come to a **crossroads**.

If you keep going straight ahead, you'll reach the motorway. If you head left you will reach Es Cremat. However, take the pathway to the right that goes down to

the stream, going through an ancient *portell* or stone gateway. As you go down, you will come upon the fence that marks the edge of the estate. You can go over it with the botador steps, and you're now on the banks of **Son Bauló stream**.

The breadth of the floodplain is striking. It is a plain that along this stretch of the stream reaches up to 100 metres wide. This valley was carved out over centuries and

Rushes and vegetation on the inland stretch of the stream.

centuries. But the river seems to have slowed down in recent years, as you can clearly see by the tiny streambed where the water flows, which is clearly marked by large rushes. This is fertile soil which must have been used in the past for livestock and agriculture, although today it is abandoned. This is another unusual spot, just a stone's throw from Can Picafort yet lost in time.

If you follow the stream towards the sea, you'll see a stone wall and an ancient cistern on the other side of a valley very close to a tall holm oak tree. From here, one pathway leads directly to Can Picafort. However, the stream cannot be followed much further because the vegetation totally blocks the way. You can see the start of the stream in a pool with dark water.

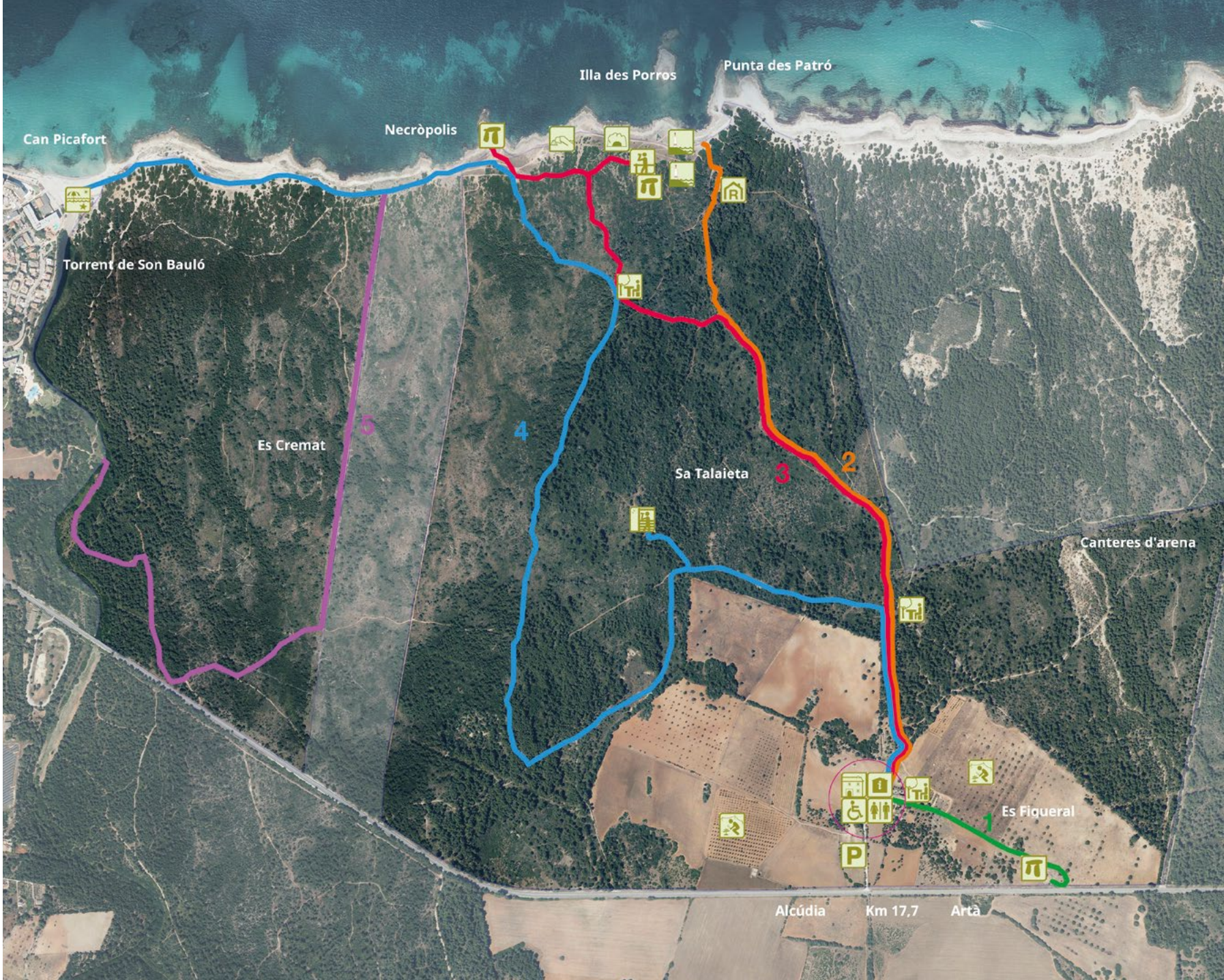
This area at the end of the stream was most likely used as a port in ancient times. In prehistoric and Roman times, ports were streams with sandy beds where the boats were moored. Since the sea level was different and the stream was probably not filled with soil and stones, many places like this one must have been covered then by running water. The same holds true of paleoports (ancient ports) like the one in Palma (which reached as far as the Rambla) and Portocristo (which traced Es Riuet heading inland).

The dense vegetation that covers the sides of this valley hide many stone ashlars, some of which might come from ancient constructions. You can go along the pathway that follows the stream until you reach the bridge on the motorway, near Son Vent. A few centuries ago, this small, fertile plain must have been a more humanised landscape quite different than it is today. Nowadays, just like the majority of streams on Mallorca; it is lost in oblivion.

Backtracking, find the crossroads again. Keep heading south towards where you started (turning right). You will skirt a section of ancient dry wall half-covered by vegetation. A little further on you will see the **opening to a well** on your left. After going under electrical cables, you will be very close to the motorway.

Map of Son Real

Itinerary 1 Itinerary 2 Itinerary 3 Itinerary 4 Itinerary 5



Books about Son Real

- RAFAEL BORDOY I POMAR. *Camins oberts a l'alba (Pathways Open in the Dawn). Poems about Son Real.* El Gall, 2007.
- CARLOS GARRIDO. *Son Real, la Mallorca perenne (Son Real, the Eternal Mallorca).* Diversitat 21, 2003.