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WORDS Daisy Sampson

Rock stars, private jets and glamorous parties marked the early 1970s in the region for author Sylvia Loch and her novel *An Algarve Affair* takes readers back in time to this golden age of the Algarve.

Although Sylvia Loch now lives back in the UK, it was her unlikely move from the world of publishing into discotheques in the Algarve that shaped the course of her life forever and her experiences at the time influenced her to write a book about the heady world of expat society in the Algarve.

Sylvia Loch told the *Algarve Goodlife Magazine*: "I first came to Portugal when I was running the first ever disco at sea on a Union Castle cruise liner and Lisbon was our first port of call. I

instantly fell in love with the city and it made a big impression on me as a young woman, so when I was approached to open the first London based club in Cascais in 1970, I was happy to make Lisbon my home from home."

The disco days of the 1970s soon pushed south to the Algarve and, in 1971, Sylvia spearheaded a programme to open a series of clubs in the cosmopolitan destination.

"This was in the time before the revolution and the region was very glamorous, a time when a private plane between Portimão and Vale do Lobo seemed commonplace. I was in charge of several clubs here and was based in Albufeira which was still very much a small fishing town then."

She added: "The expats here were generally quite glamorous

but there was an almost hippy feeling during the day while in the evening people transformed and hit the clubs where you could find members of The Beatles, the Rolling Stones and Cat Stevens."

The jet set party atmosphere of the region inspired Sylvia to write her novel *An Algarve Affair* while living here, but it had sat in a drawer until her daughter Allegra encouraged her to take another look at the book recently.

"When I first wrote *An Algarve Affair*, I was in my twenties and I have to admit it was very steamy! When I looked at it again, it was like stepping back to that time and with the encouragement of Allegra I went about getting it published, after some toning down and rewriting!"

Sylvia Loch is no stranger to writing but is better known for her critically acclaimed books about riding, Portuguese history and the Lusitano horses, a passion she developed while living in the Algarve.

"I had always ridden and an old boyfriend took me to Monchique one day to ride in the mountains, where I met my future husband Henry, Major the Lord Loch of Drylaw. This was the start of a great love affair for

us both and changed my life as I gave up the nightlife and became involved once again in riding and teaching with Henry."

First the couple started a dressage centre in Loulé and then later moved it to the UK where they had their daughter Allegra but continued with the horses.

Sadly Henry died in 1982 but this pushed Sylvia forward to promote the Lusitano horses which the couple had brought to the UK and were the first in the country.

After travelling the world as a trainer, writer, judge and lecturer, Sylvia has returned to her passion for fiction and the Algarve and released *An Algarve Affair* in 2010 to the delight of her friends and admirers.

Sylvia said: "While the book is fictional, the backdrop is very accurate and runs alongside the revolution here as it was written while it was happening. I hope that readers will find it not only a great story of friendship, passion and intrigue but also a way to learn a little more about the Algarve of old." ●●●

*An Algarve Affair* is available from the Griffin Bookshop in Almancil and also online. For further information please visit [www.black-tent.co.uk](http://www.black-tent.co.uk)