

Birthing Stones House: a case of success in Arouca Global Geopark

ALEXANDRA PAZ^{1,2}, RICARDO OLIVEIRA^{1,2}, DANIELA ROCHA², ANTÓNIO DUARTE^{1,2}, AND ARTUR A. SÁ³ - 1. *Casa das Pedras Parideiras, Centro de Interpretação, R. de Santo António, Castanheira, 4540-012 Arouca, Portugal <apaz@geoparquearouca.com>* ¶ 2. *AGA, Associação Geoparque Arouca, R. Alfredo Vaz Pinto, Apartado 20, 4540-118 Arouca, Portugal* ¶ 3. *Departamento de Geologia, Universidade de Trás-os-Montes e Alto Douro, Quinta de Prados, 5000-801 Vila Real, Portugal*

In Castanheira village (Arouca Global Geopark, Portugal) crops out a singular geological phenomenon, related to the weathering of the Castanheira Nodular Granite. It exhibits a type of granitic nodular texture that as far as it is known, is unique in Portugal and worldwide. Through the process of erosion, black nodules are released from the host granite and accumulate in the soil, leaving a small cavity on the rock coated by a thin biotitic layer. Due to this phenomenon, local farmers and shepherds have been calling this rock, for a very long time, as the “stone that give birth” (*Pe- dras Parideiras*), which became one of the most visited geosites in Arouca Global Geopark. In November 2012, the “Casa das Pedras Parideiras” (Birthing Stones House – Interpretation Centre) located in the Castanheira village opened to the public. This new infrastructure was created in a restored small traditional house to enhance and endow this geosite at the Freita Mountain. The main aim is to promote its scientific, educational, cultural, recreational and touristic potential. Thus, the services offered by the interpretation centre includes guided visits by specialized guides from the museum and also to the Freita plateau to general public and educational community, touristic information, and shop with locally manufactured products. Between November 2012 and December 2013 were received 30,504 visitants of whom 53% were individual visitors, 25% touristic groups, 21% educational groups and 1% visitors in work context (journalists, master’s theses, among others). The main visitors are Portuguese from the north region of the country. The foreign visitors represent 3% and come mainly from Brazil, Spain and Germany. Due to the high influx of visitors, three full time jobs for people were created, who also nowadays help the local inhabitants, mostly of them elderly. It is a true case of success in Arouca Global Geopark.

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