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Carcavelos
2777-601 PAREDE

IRELAND AND EVORA

by Pat O'Connell

Although until recently long-forgotten the relationship between Ireland and Portugal was strong for over four hundred years. It existed mainly in the religious and educational spheres, through the presence in Lisbon of Irish exiled religious, especially the Irish Dominicans in *Corpo Santo*, the Irish Dominican sisters in *Bom Sucesso* and also because of the establishment in 1590 of the Irish College of Saint Patrick, located in the *Escadinhas de São Crispim* in the *Rua de São Mamede*.

The reasons for the setting-up of the Irish college network on the continent are well known. There were in all twenty-nine Irish colleges established from 1578 to 1680 on the European mainland. The object of these colleges was the education of aspirants to the priesthood for eventual ordination. The first Irish college on the continent was in Paris, founded in 1578, which was recently reborn as the *Centre Cultural Irlandais*. Unable to set up such colleges in Ireland because of religious persecution and anti-Catholic laws, twelve colleges for the training of their own members were set up by religious orders, such as the Irish Franciscans, Dominicans, Augustinians, Capuchins and Carmelites in France, Italy, the Low Countries, Bohemia and Poland.

Seventeen Irish colleges were also established for the purpose of training secular or diocesan clergy: five in France, five in Spain, one in Portugal, five in the Low Countries and one in Italy. In Portugal and Spain the Society of Jesus ran five of the six until the suppression of the Order in both kingdoms in 1759 and 1769 respectively. Initially, the Jesuits running the colleges were Irish but due to various factors this changed over time. Since the Jesuit Order had been founded in Spain in 1534 and was active in the Counter-Reformation, its members were chosen to administer the Irish

colleges in both Spain and Portugal.

The Irish college of St Patrick at Lisbon was run by the Jesuits who trained and educated the students as future secular priests. Of course, some joined the Society of Jesus and it is somewhat easier to get information about them through well-documented Jesuit sources than to trace the story of the secular priests. The scarcity of church archives in Ireland because of the Penal Laws over several centuries means that historians have to rely largely on continental sources to fill the gaps.

The students entered the seminary in Lisbon at about eighteen years of age and spent seven years studying Arts, Philosophy and Theology. After ordination they returned to Ireland but some went on to the Jesuit University of Évora to study for higher degrees. A few also followed courses for the degree of bachelor but the majority studied for masters and doctorates. D. Enrique, the cardinal-king, had established the university of Évora in 1559. The Irish enrolled at the College of the Purification, which was specifically established for the purpose of educating diocesan priests at the university.

When the earthquake struck Lisbon in 1755 there were eight students at the Irish College, Lisbon. Five of them returned home to Ireland but three were sent to Évora by royal decree to finish their course. Father Michael Daly was one of these and thanks to his years of study in the university became an eminent scholar - he was a specialist in canon law, he spoke fluent Portuguese, French and German and was an outstanding classical scholar. The Irish College was badly damaged in the earthquake and was seized at the time of the suppression of the Jesuits and the confiscation of their property.

Father Daly returned to Lisbon in March 1758 after the completion of his studies and ordination and was invited to accept the professorship of Greek in the *Colégio dos Nobres* (the College of the Nobles) by the chief minister of King José I, Dom Sebastião José de Carvalho e Melo, Marquis of Pombal, who was the most powerful man in Portugal at that time and the founder of the College of the Nobles. The newly ordained priest was very distressed at the fate of

the college and made it his life's work to get it, and its contents, back. When the Marquis of Pombal fell from power in 1777 Father Daly's efforts, which had lasted 21 years, were successful. Queen Maria I then made him rector of the college when it reopened in 1778. John Thomas Troy, the Dominican bishop of Ossory and later archbishop of Dublin was an ardent.

Obviously during the closure of the Lisbon college no students made their way to the College of the Purification in the University of Évora. This fact is alluded to in a collection of letters published in 1787 in London. A certain Captain Arthur Costigan, who had served in an Irish regiment in Spain, travelled through Portugal and Spain in 1778/9. In one of his letters he tells of his arrival in Évora with some travelling companions. As they walked in the main square, *Praça de Giraldo*, they met up with an old Irish priest, Dr Butler, who had been president of what was termed the 'Irish College' which had had no students since 1762. He lived a peaceful, if penurious life, and was apparently an entertaining guide to the city, gave them good wine from the college cellars and engaged them in amusing conversation. This meeting is recounted in Rose Macauley's book *They went to Portugal, too*. It may be that there had been so many Irish in Évora up to 1762 that it was generally assumed that the College of the Purification was, in fact, an Irish College.

The college is now the National Seminary and many of the present-day seminarians are from former Portuguese colonies, now independent, including East Timor. The president of Ireland, Mrs Mary McAleese, on her recent state visit to Portugal included the University of Évora and the former college of the Purification in her itinerary.

In the course of my research in the Biblioteca Pública de Évora I have up to the present found fifty-nine Irish names in the university examination lists dating from 1616 to 1718. There are, of course, many gaps in the 102 year period covered by the records, and I think that the 59 names are only the tip of an, admittedly, small iceberg and warrant further searching. The lists seen by me cover only two subjects, theology and cases of conscience. It would appear from

these lists that the Irish were the only outsiders studying these subjects.

It is worthy of note that Irish clerics who lived in Lisbon, particularly in the 19th century, were often appointed as preceptors by members of the nobility and were also in great demand as chaplains to many aristocratic families. The task of the preceptor was to advise his aristocratic patron on cases of conscience or on the precepts of the Church in matters of conscience. Two prominent nobles who had Irish preceptors were the Duke of Cadaval, (whose family castle stands in Évora near the Roman temple and the *Pousada dos Loios*) and the duke of Lafões.

One Irish priest, Fr Hyacinth Joyce from the archdiocese of Tuam, and later rector of St Patrick's College, Lisbon, travelled to Brazil in the suite of another nobleman as chaplain-cum-preceptor. This was prior to the invasion of Portugal at the start of the Peninsular War, when the royal family and the court, numbering several thousands, left before Portugal became a theatre of war.

Amongst the names of Irish students at the University of Évora in the period 1618 to 1685 there are three who became prelates. John Burke (João de Burgo) was a theologian in the college from 1622 to 1625 and became bishop of Clonfert from (1641 to 1647) and subsequently archbishop of Tuam (1647 to 1666). He had been ordained on 23rd May 1621.

Eustace Brown (Eustáquio Bruno), ordained on 24th September 1672 was from the diocese of Cashel and became bishop of Killaloe (1713-24). He studied at the Irish College, Lisbon and received a doctorate, *cum laude*, on 31th December 1681 at Évora. John Verdon became bishop of Ferns in 1709 and died in 1728. He also received a doctorate from the University of Évora.

Apart from three other students the majority of the seminarians are, to date, just names and a great deal of work is needed to identify them and fit them into the Irish ecclesiastical scene, But the important factor is that they have been definitely identified as Irish

students in Évora.

Peter Power(s) (Pedro Pueros), a Master of Arts, from the diocese of Emly became tutor to the eldest son of the future King João IV (father of Catherine of Braganza). He declined a bishopric and remained at Court until his death in 1649. Edmundo Kelly (Edmondo Quelli) who became a Jesuit and later rector of St Patrick's College, Lisbon (1655-8) was from the Clonfert diocese. He studied Philosophy and Theology in Évora and was sent by his Order to the Azores to teach Moral Theology before being assigned to St Patrick's. Andrew O'Brien, who was present in Évora in 1690-5, was subsequently chaplain and confessor to Catherine of Braganza when she became the wife of Charles II of England.

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Patricia O'Connell is an Irish historian who has specialised in the history of Irish Seminaries abroad. She has written a book on the Irish Seminary in Lisbon – São Patricio – which used to exist in the *Escadinhas de São Crispim* near the *Castelo São Jorge*. At present she is writing about the Irish College in Santiago de Compostella.