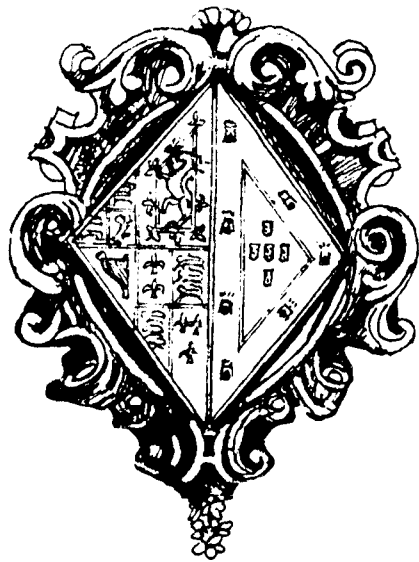


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THE LISBON ROOM AT USHAW

by Michael Sharratt

The English College in Lisbon trained priests for service in England and Wales for almost three hundred and fifty years. Its first students came from the English College at Douai in 1628. The daughter College kept fond memories of its origins and found it perfectly natural to appeal to this connection when asking for help with staffing in the middle of the eighteenth century. Douai College was forced to close in 1793 in the aftermath of the French revolution, but Lisbon College survived the disruption of the Peninsular war to resume its work of training priests and to establish connections with the seminaries newly founded in England. There eventually came a stage when it was increasingly difficult to find qualified staff to provide the formation envisaged by the Second Vatican Council and in 1971 the Bishops of England and Wales took the difficult decision to disperse the College's students to other seminaries.

By 1973 it was clear that the College had closed definitively and there was a serious danger that little would survive to commemorate its achievements over the centuries. The President, Monsignor James Sullivan, invested energy and imagination in ensuring that some permanent record of the College's work would survive in England. What he had in mind was a room which would house all the extant archives of the College and a selection of books from its libraries, a selection which would give some idea of the College's work and range of interests from its earliest days to its closure. He

chose Ushaw College, Durham, as the site for what is now known as The Lisbon Room. There were two reasons for his choice. One was that Ushaw, like Lisbon College, is a daughter of Douai. The other was that Ushaw has a research library and archives which are well known to historians of English Catholicism and that it has excellent and close connections with the University of Durham. So the Lisbon Collection is housed in the Lisbon Room of the Library Wing at Ushaw.

There are about 2000 printed books in the Collection. It has to be said that most of the books are in poor condition, since bookworm seems to have been endemic in the College's main library. It is known that a significant number had to be destroyed soon after the Second World War and it is likely that others disappeared earlier. Despite all precautions, live worm survived the journey to Ushaw in 1974. So the first task was to fumigate the Lisbon Room itself, along with all the books and the adjacent rooms of Ushaw's library complex. Fortunately the fumigation was successful and the repair of some of the more damaged bindings could be resumed. Equally fortunately the archives room in Lisbon seems to have been worm-free, at least in modern times.

Naturally many of the books are connected with the teaching and spiritual formation provided by the College. Association copies provide a special interest. There are several works by John Sergeant, a Lisbonian, who was the most prolific Catholic controversialist of the second half of the seventeenth century. Some books are there because they were given to the College by the author and one or two because they were both written and printed in the College. Many deal with the Church in England and many with the Church in Portugal or with Anglo-Portuguese relations. It makes a useful little collection with the occasional rarity such as the first edition of the Exercises of St Ignatius.

Among the portraits are those of the first President, Joseph Harvey or Haynes, and the last President, Mgr Sullivan; there are also portraits of John Sergeant and Bishop Russell of Portalegre and Vizeu; and it is interesting to see early photographs of some of the teaching staff. The splendid silver sanctuary lamp from the College chapel hangs in the center of the room and on the east wall is the magnificent ivory crucifix from the high altar. The College's sundial, by Thomas Wright, 1732, is a fine piece of work and much less weathered than its Ushaw counterpart which is its junior by a hundred years.

To scholars the main interest of the Collection lies in the archives. Apart from some stubs from cheque books, the complete surviving archives were brought to Ushaw. 'Surviving' is a necessary qualification; tradition has it that the archives suffered badly when the College was occupied during the Peninsular War and internal cross-references make it quite certain that some items which were in the College towards the end of the seventeenth century did not survive as long as the College and may well have been lost or destroyed long before the College closed. It is convenient to treat the archives under two headings: book archives and sheet archives.

There are two hundred and eighty four items in book form, some bound in vellum, some in leather, some mere home-made notebooks with the first and last pages of writing serving as the cover. The most important is the Annales or register of staff and students from the beginning of the College. I have edited this with an introduction and extensive notes as Lisbon College Register 1628 - 1813, Catholic Record Society, Volume 72, 1991. Since the notes draw on all the relevant archives in the Collection, this volume serves as a useful tool for any scholar interested in matters connected with the first two centuries of the College's history. The register for later years is a mixture of the anecdotal and the schematic and has not yet been prepared for publication.

Other important volumes include the various editions of the printed Constitutions of the College (1635, 1819, 1865), the Regimina (instructions for office-holders), the Liber Missionis, and the books containing the oaths sworn by Presidents and alumni. The Protector of the College was the Inquisitor General of Portugal, so the written records of his visitations contain useful information about the daily regime of the College. It is not always easy to reconstruct the everyday life of institutions but pretty well everything one would like to know about meals, clothes, teaching, disputations, examinations, recreation, the infirmary, funerals, the sacristy, Church services, sermons, refectory reading, libraries, rewards and punishment and a few other things as well can be found listed in the Regimina of 1639.

A large part of the College's time was devoted to learning and teaching. Unfortunately hardly anything on this topic from the seventeenth century has survived. There is a useful collection of eighteenth-century 'dictates' (lectures taken down in contracted Latin by students), including some from Douai College, but no posters or pamphlets advertising the regular public disputations which the College, like other educational institutions, certainly staged, so any account of what was taught in the College in the eighteenth century will find only occasional sources here. There is, for instance, enough evidence to give a more nuanced version of the College's tradition that John Preston taught Newtonianism in the 1750s.

As one would expect, a substantial portion of the book archives consists of account books that cover the day-to-day expenses of the College and its income from various sources. Another side of College life is reflected in sermons preached in the College. There are also letter-books of Presidents from the early eighteenth century onwards; these provide a pretty full account of College life and of its

contacts with England. They are the outgoing side of the official correspondence of the College, with the other side kept in the sheet archives where the incoming letters are catalogued in chronological order.

These incoming letters were usually addressed to the President, though other addressees are also included. Many of them were written by whoever acted as the College's agent or procurator in England; these are supplemented by the official accounts sent by the agents, accounts which are catalogued in a separate series but often include a lengthy letter on the same sheet as the accounts. All the letters in the main series of correspondence have been calendared, that is, summarised on 6 x 4 index cards - the calendaring was completed before personal computers became affordable - so one can absorb the gist of three centuries worth of letters in an hour or two. In 1986 I compiled a printed handlist of all the letters from the beginning of the series until 1918; in fact, there are not many letters after 1918, but that date was chosen so that living members of the College would not have to worry whether items from their student days would be exposed to inspection during their lifetime. This alphabetical list gives each letter written by or to those listed, using the date as the finding tool. Thus postal queries about whether there are any letters in the Collection written by or to a given person are swiftly answered. Anyone using the list in the Lisbon Room can either go to the typed summaries or straight to the letter in its chronological position in the series.

The handlist is 48 pages long and is supplemented by a 10-page introduction that gives a summary of all the series in the sheet archives. The summary is sufficiently detailed to let enquirers or visiting scholars see quickly what parts of the archives may be useful to them. It also includes a short bibliography of articles based on the Lisbon Collection since its arrival at Ushaw.

Other series of letters will interest some scholars. Those of the founder, Pedro Coutinho, run from 1621 to 1631; they are written in barely legible Portuguese but they have been calendared and the substance of what they say is clear enough. For the relations of the rather awkward Coutinho with the College's second President, Thomas White or Blacklow, see my 'Blacklow and Coutinho in 1633', Ushaw Magazine, December 1977, pp. 16-25 and June 1978, pp. 18-26. Blacklow, another Douai man was something of a maverick philosopher and theologian. He thought of himself as an Aristotelian but later became highly suspect to his co-religionists in England, a suspicion that also attached to another Lisbonian, his follower, John Sergeant. It is a pity that there is little in the Lisbon Collection of Blacklow's, except of course for the College's original Constitutions of which he was the chief author. Richard Russell was another Lisbonian and there is a small packet of his papers from the period when he was engaged in the Portuguese diplomatic service; they reflect his part in arranging the marriage of Catherine of Braganza to Charles II; these papers are calendared on cards. A fuller series (also calendared) is his regular letters written from 1667 to 1686 to the President, Matthias Watkinson. I drew on these in an article 'Bishop Russell and John Sergeant', Ushaw Magazine, June 1979, pp. 22-37, where one can see Russell's continual bristling at what he takes to be the Blacklowist manoeuvrings of the misguided and dangerous Sergeant. It is a disappointment that Russell's papers throw only incidental light on his work as Bishop of Portalegre and none at all on his time at Vizeu.

Papers connected with the foundation of the College are all calendared. This series includes a very lengthy account of how the first students travelled from Douai to Lisbon, some of them walking all the way, with others taking a boat once they reached Spain. I have published a translation of this in

'Douai to Lisbon', Ushaw Magazine, December 1975, pp. 7-24; June 1976, pp. 30-41 and December 1976, pp. 22-34. From the same period (1621-1632) is the (calendared) series of the papers of William Newman, an English priest who did more than anyone to found the College, as is clear from various documents in the Collection. But these papers (William Newman's Papers) refer to his official employment as chaplain in Lisbon and have no reference to the College. Naturally there are various papers giving necessary ecclesiastical licences or dispensations; these are in two (calendared) series: Roman Documents and Ecclesiastical Licences (mainly Portuguese and English). For those interested in Anglo-Portuguese commercial relations there is a series (Donovan Papers) belonging to a merchant in Lisbon who was friendly with the College. An unusual item for a seminary is the Marriage Register. Its presence is accounted for by the fact that Edmund Winstanley (later President) acted as chaplain to Wellington's troops in Lisbon. There is also a (calendared) series concerning the English Bridgettine nuns at Syon Abbey, Lisbon (1601-1940); it includes correspondence after 1861 when the nuns were at their new home at South Brent.

I cannot here give even a brief description of all the other series of papers in the Collection. It will come as no surprise that there is a great quantity of legal documents in Portuguese, mainly ones concerned with the various properties owned by the College at one time or another. They would, no doubt, be of interest to specialists but so far no one has worked on them, whereas a good deal has been published using the materials I have indicated above.

I know that there are people living in Lisbon who have very affectionate memories of the late Monsignor James Sullivan. One of the pleasures of his years of retirement was to visit the Lisbon Room and he was always generous in his

appreciation of the work that has been done on the Collection since it came to Ushaw. I take this opportunity of thanking the Lisbonian Society: the alumni of the College have been consistently generous in their support of the Lisbon Room. I also thank Dr Michael Williams who has made excellent use of the archival material in his articles in both English and Portuguese.

I conclude by noting that the Lisbon Room is open to all scholars by written appointment and that there is no admission charge. Those who would simply like to see the room without having any scholarly project in hand are likewise welcome free of charge by written appointment. Written appointments are necessary since it is not possible to have regular opening hours and some notice is needed. Members of the British Historical Society of Portugal will be especially welcome.

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Father Michael Sharratt is in charge of the Old Lisbon English College archives which contribute to the Ushaw Room at Durham University in England. Father Sharatt has contributed to the Annual Report in the past.

