

EDITORIAL NOTE

This Sixth Annual Report & Review was to have been edited by the late James Foote who had decided that the articles in it should be devoted to the English College of Lisbon, where the British Historical Society now has its headquarters.

We are, therefore, reprinting a short history of the College, by Sir Alfred Norris, followed by a contemporary account of how its first inmates made the journey from Douai to Lisbon in 1628. This was translated from the Latin by Fr. Michael Sharratt of Ushaw College, Durham University, and subsequently edited by James Foote.

The Society wishes to thank Fr. Sharratt and Ushaw College for allowing it to reproduce this material.

THE ENGLISH COLLEGE, LISBON

by A. H. NORRIS

The Pontifical College of St. Peter and St. Paul, known to the Portuguese as «O Colégio dos Inglezinhos» and to the British as the English College, was founded as long ago as 1622 and is by far the oldest British establishment in Portugal.

The intention to found at Lisbon a College where English secular priests could be trained for the Mission in post-Reformation England and Wales was first conceived by Fr. Nicholas Aston, Visitor to the Inquisition in Lisbon and chaplain to the local English residents. Similar Colleges already existed

in various European countries and others were to be founded later. Fr. Aston bought a house suitable for his purpose but died before he could complete his plan. His successor, Fr. William Newman, to whom he left the house, encountered a wealthy Portuguese nobleman, Dom Pedro Coutinho, who offered to buy a suitable piece of land, construct the necessary buildings and endow the enterprise. The land he bought was that on which the College stands to-day.

Permission to establish the College was obtained from the King of Portugal in 1621 and the following year the necessary Papal Brief was received from the Vatican. Difficulties now arose with Dom Pedro Coutinho who, «old and whimsical, did not know his own mind for 2 weeks together and, after holding out prospects of the most flattering kind, limited his benefaction to the purchase of the ground, with a few adjoining houses, to the erection of a small and imperfectly built church, and to a donation of 500 Crowns (£150) a year». This land, together with Fr. Aston's house, was formally made over to the English Clergy, in the person of their agent, and became British property, which it has remained ever since.

So little of Coutinho's gift remained after buying the land and building the church, that no more could be done than patch up the existing mean, one-storey buildings, and even this took 5 years to complete. The following year, 1628, the 1st President of the College, Fr. Joseph Harvey, brought from the English College at Douai, in Flanders, 10 volunteer pupils and two teachers, and the schools finally opened on 25 April 1629.

The first years of the existence of the College were marked by the direst poverty and the life led by the students and Superiors was relentlessly hard. «The College fare was in keeping with the wretched fabric, 2 pounds of rice often serving as a meal for the whole establishment.» The President and Superiors received no pay for the duties they performed.

The conditions continued until the early years of the 18th century. Yet this one historian calls the most brilliant period in

the history of the College. The quality of the missionaries sent to England was so good that it was said: «The College at Lisbon never had a morning but shone out at once in all the splendour of meridian day». (Dr. Barnard, President 1756-1776).

The first rebuilding of the College began in 1714. «The ancient dilapidated edifice» was gradually removed and on its site the new foundations were laid down; they were well laid; they still exist to-day. But, through scarcity of funds, it took 13 years to raise the building to a single storey and, when it was at last roofed in 1727, the interior was left in so unfinished a state that, for a considerable time, the College was called «the Lisbon Barn». It was still in this unsightly condition when it was struck by the earthquake of 1755. The only fatal casualty was the President, Fr. Manley, who was killed by the fall of the belfry, the one remaining piece of the original College. The students fled to the river where they were taken on board British ships, later to return temporarily to live in tents in the College garden. Soon the whole community, except one or two Superiors, moved across the Tagus to the College property at Pera. «Many poor families of the neighbourhood, who had been deprived of shelter, took possession of the ground apartments which were arched and strong and, till a late period, there existed in the vicinity many a venerable sire who owned, for his birthplace, the lower corridors of the English College.»

For some years funds were barely sufficient to educate a very limited number of students. In 1777 the parts of the buildings damaged by the earthquake were still unrepaired and the rest was in the unfinished state it had been left in in 1738. In most parts it rose to only one storey; the ground floor had never been flagged and the corridor was open to the rafters. Between 1777 and 1780, however, the ruined parts were restored, the whole building put in a good state of repair and a comfortable residence provided for 25 students and Superiors. The principal subscribers for this reconstruction were the British residents of Lisbon.

About 1800, most other English colleges on the continent having been closed in consequence of the Napoleonic Wars, the Superiors resolved to enlarge the College to almost its present size, with room for 40 students as well as Superiors and Masters. At this time the Observatory was constructed. The King of Portugal, Dom Pedro III, paid for these extensions out of his privy purse.

The College church had always been reputed to be the worst and meanest in the City and by 1814 had fallen into such a wretched state as to be dangerous. It was then given a new roof and the whole interior restored. At the same time the house was extended to accommodate 50 students and became as it is to-day. In 1857 the choir was added to the church, which was redecorated and in 1896 the whole College, house and church, was completely reroofed.

The College building has little claim to architectural distinction. The characteristics which most strike a visitor are its size, solidity and spaciousness. The most pleasing features are the Divines' Garden, part of which was once a cemetery, the entrance hall, the refectory and the library. Quite recently there have been as many as 56 students in residence; but at the end of the 1914-1918 war there were only 3. This wide variation in numbers, coupled with the opinion that priests are best trained in the environment in which they are to serve, no doubt influenced the decision to close the College in Lisbon.

When the French army under Junot occupied Lisbon at the end of 1807, the College, like all other British property, was expropriated by the invader. The students and Superiors of the College, however, were allowed to remain in the building but were confined to the second floor, the garden and the church. The College kitchen was shared by the College and the French troops, 280 of whom, with 12 officers took over the rest of the property. The students were also permitted to circulate in the city. During the occupation, which lasted 9 months, 4 of the students, with the connivance of the Superiors, escaped to the

English fleet which was cruising off the mouth of the Tagus, and were conveyed to England. During their occupation the French were considerate in their treatment and, on their withdrawal, restored all the property they had borrowed with the exception of one sheet! Shortly afterwards, when the French army under Soult initiated a fresh invasion of Portugal, it was decided to evacuate the remaining students to England, together with College valuables and a large part of the library. The Superiors who remained in the College, in order to provide funds for the upkeep of the building, organised an Anglo-Portuguese Academy for youths. This proved a great success. The College reverted in 1814 to the original purpose of its foundation.

Throughout its long history the College was fortunate in being served by many men of outstanding ability, some of whom achieved extra-collegiate distinction. The first of these was Fr. John Robinson who, when the post fell vacant during the English civil war, was appointed English Consul General by the Portuguese authorities in exercise of a right they had long claimed. Fr. Robinson held the post for 4 years and the appointment was recognised by the English parliament. Shortly afterwards Dr. Russel, a priest of the College, was invited to join the suite of the Portuguese Ambassador appointed to England. There he stayed several years and, after playing a prominent part in arranging the marriage of Charles II to Catherine of Bragança, according to one historian «performed the nuptial ceremony». «..... the College can justly claim that it was partly owing to the action of Dr. Russel that India came into the Empire, for Portugal was persuaded to offer Bombay as part of the dowry of the Infanta Catherine». After his return to Portugal Dr. Russel became Bishop of Portalegre and later of Viseu. Dr. Godden, 8th President of the College, resigned his post to become chaplain and preceptor to the Princess, whom he accompanied to England in 1662. He stayed on in England when she became Queen and was allotted apartments in Somerset House, where he died in 1688.

A generous benefactor of the College about this time was Francis Nicholson who, as a member of Queen Catherine's suite, returned with her to Portugal in 1692. He came to live in the College, to which he made over all his property, including the Quinta at Pera, which became the holiday home of the College. It is remembered, even to-day, by ex-students of the College, with gratitude and affection.

Amongst the many members of the College who had close relations with the Portuguese Court, Fr. John Preston was one of the most famous. He was nominated tutor to the young Prince of Brazil and was an intimate of the Marquis of Pombal, who referred to him as «the great Preston». It was due to the influence of Fr Jerome Allen that King Pedro III paid for the rebuilding of the College in 1807. When the College became temporarily an Academy during the Peninsular War one of the College priests, Fr. Edmund Winstanley, offered his services to Lord Wellington and became visiting army chaplain to the 20 military hospitals in and around Lisbon. He followed the army and did not return to the College until after Waterloo. He was later President of the College for 32 years. A more recent President, Dr. Peter Baines, identified himself with the local British Community and administered the British Charitable Fund for 13 years.

An interesting feature of the administration of the College is that the rules, made soon after the foundation of the College, remained in force with very little change until the present day. By these the non-tutorial departments of the College were supervised by senior students. Many students were admitted in their early teens; the course lasted 8 or 9 years. After ordination and service with the Mission some students returned to take up positions on the College staff. The students wore traditional uniform of a distinctive cassock and biretta, but when this was introduced is uncertain. Until quite recently the uniform was a familiar sight on the streets of Lisbon. When, after the revo-

lution of 1910, the wearing of clerical garb in public was forbidden, an exception was made favour of the «Inglezinhos».

Another tradition of uncertain origin but presumed to date from the Peninsular War, was the «right», whenever a ship of the Royal Navy was in port, to «demand» its white Ensign and to fly it from the Observatory on the roof of the College. Whether or not the Ensign was later returned is not recorded; certainly it was not on the occasion of Her Majesty the Queen's visit to Lisbon on the Royal Yacht since that Ensign was presented to this Society by the last President of the College and is now one of our most prized possessions!

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