

38.

CHURCH OF SAINT ANDREW OF VILA BOA DE QUIRES



Rua de Santo André, Vila
Boa de Quires, Marco
de Canaveses



41° 12' 29,38" N
8° 12' 5.16" W



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Saturday, 4 pm (winter)
or 5 pm (summer)
Sunday, 8 and 11 am



Saint Andrew
30th November



National Monument
1927



P. 25



P. 25



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Most certainly founded before 1118, the Church we see today was surely built after that date, probably in the second quarter of the 13th century. It is based on the plastic quality of the remaining stylistic elements and of the alphabetic design of the initials we find here (especially the ones on the voussoirs of the south portal) that we should understand the Romanesque architecture of this Church.

With a single nave and a rectangular chancel, the Church of Vila Boa de Quires stands out in terms of composition for having one of the most elaborate main façades in the Baixo Tâmega region: it shows two levels; one includes the portal and the other includes the large window placed above it. This scheme is similar to the one of the Church of Barrô (Resende) (p. 130) and derives from the influence of the composition that the façade of the Coimbra cathedral had at the time. The mullioned window whose tympanum features a hollowed cross is framed by elongated archivolts supported by columns with sculpted capitals. The portal of the Church of Vila Boa de Quires is stylistically very close to the main portal of the Monastery of Paço de Sousa (Penafiel) (p. 90): the



THE PORTOCARREIRO LINEAGE

Being the epicentre of the Portocarreiros' influence - a lineage that was particularly important within the manorial assertion context of the 13th century -, the "couto" [a type of Portuguese administrative division] of Vila Boa de Quires stood out in the Middle Ages as a centre that spread family and ecclesiastical interests; in this parish there are still very expressive legacies of the power of this local landowning nobility, which produced inescapable works like the tower of the Portocarreiros (of which only the memory remains) and the exuberant façade of the palatial residence (p. 276) whose mentor is believed to have been António José de Vasconcelos de Carvalho e Meneses (1714-1799).

capitals show symmetrical botanic and stylised motifs that are well attached to the frustum and were carved with a bevel; the corbels are shaped as bovine heads. So, the Church of Vila Boa de Quires fits into a language that has been called as the "nationalised Romanesque" style.

However, the interpretation of this façade cannot ignore the fact that, in 1881, in addition to the construction of the bell tower, the Church's nave was extended in approximately 10 meters, thus moving the façade, whose primitive language was preserved.





On the south façade we immediately notice three broken arcosolia located at the nave's ground level; the shape of their sepulchral lids does not match the space of the arches. They stand out for the absence of decorative motifs or elements to identify the people who were buried in them. We should highlight the richly ornamented south portal, which is also stylistically related to the Romanesque style that spread from the Monastery of Paço de Sousa: the capitals that were carved with a bevel show botanic and phytomorphic motifs and two affronted animals of oriental influences. The flat tympanum is supported by animal heads. The impostes are decorated with botanic motifs that are common to the Romanesque style as a whole.

In the Church of Vila Boa de Quires, the modillions are predominantly plain, although on the north side we can highlight one shaped as a bovine head and another one shaped as a human face. This side of the façade is extremely simple and the portal is the result of an intervention carried out during the Modern Period.

The care put on the ends of the building's back walls shows the quality of the workshop (or workshops) that worked in the Romanesque construction of the Church of Vila Boa de Quires. The nave's back gable is punctuated by pearls and the chancel features a terminal pattée cross. The "Monasterii Ville Bone de Queeriz" was still active in 1258, and the Church was only turned into a parish church in the early 14th century, before 1320. So, Quires was built as a monastic church, something that helps us to have better understanding of the quality and the elaborate nature of its construction.

Let us go inside. The nave's sober and plain nature offers a stark contrast with the chancel's colour. The triumphal arch, which is broken and composed of three archivolts, shows very original capitals on which there are sculpted palmettes and mermaids with intertwined tails; the sculptures are not very protuberant and their arrangement is not that well-adjusted to the capitals' shape, thus revealing a different hand from the one that carved

19TH-CENTURY CHANGES

We should carefully read the description made by Pedro Augusto Ferreira, the abbot of Miragaia, who succeeded Pinho Leal as the writer of *Ancient and modern Portugal...* : "§ Since the church was too small for the current number of residents in this parish, it was recently extended, adding almost twice its length, extending its side walls until they absorbed the galilee or the porch-like structure it had in front of it, which was slightly lower than the church, closed on the south side by the wall – firmly supported on the north and west sides by stone columns – and attached, on the east side, to the front of the church, which was and still is facing west. § They also added a tower, because it only had a belfry for two bells that finished the temple's façade. § The greatest care was taken in respecting its architectural style, so the façade that currently exists is only slightly different from the one that existed before the extension. It was merely moved a few meters forward, preserving its elegant portico, which is currently more eye-catching and free from obstacles, with its four orders of columns and corresponding arcades, firmly supported by capitals with plenty of ornaments, representing ox heads and other animals, all in granite, and the old temple's crevice above it, showing the same style as the portico. §".

the Church's portals. The arch's polychromy is the result of a recent and not very erudite intervention.

A general observation of the chevet of the Church of Vila Boa de Quires, which has a clearly Romanesque structure (com-

posed of two bays with a vault supported by a transverse arch resting on pilasters decorated with palmettes carved in relief on the imposts), gives us a clear picture of what the Post-Tridentine *horror vacui* was, although here it is represented



THE IMPORTANCE OF COLOUR IN ROMANESQUE ARCHITECTURE

We bear in mind that, in the Romanesque period, seldom did the sacred space have a plain atmosphere. The polychromy of the walls themselves was combined with textile elements. The clean look of the stone inside churches is the result of a recent interpretation that dates back to the restoration interventions carried out in the 20th century. The polychromy found on the triumphal arch may allow us to conduct a good mental exercise on the true appearance of our Romanesque architectural sculpture.



by elements that range from the 17th to the 19th centuries. The Neoclassical main altarpiece is the most recent element, although it integrates elements from other periods in its composition. Saint Andrew and Saint Peter are flanking a large canvas depicting the Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament and the Mystic Lamb by two angels. The lateral walls are lined with tiles typical from the first half of the 17th century, which show a geometric "carpet-like" composition painted in blue and yellow shades over a white background. The ensemble is completed by the paintings on the chevet's vault, which probably date back to the first quarter of the 18th century and narrate, in eight pictures, scenes from the Trial and Passion of Christ; their iconographic path ends on the mural painting that is located in the nave, above the triumphal arch. Despite its nature, which is not very erudite, this is indeed a curious and eccentric example of a decorative painting that brings to a stone vault a type of work that is usually

associated with joinery, carpentry and woodwork, like the coffered ceilings.

In the nave we see three altars. The collateral altars reuse both Mannerist and Baroque structural and ornamental elements. The one on the left of the observer facing the chancel is dedicated to Our Lady of Sorrows and the one on the opposite side is dedicated to the Virgin of the Rosary of Fátima. Still in the nave, on the left side and close to the pulpit, we find an altarpiece embedded in the wall where the image of the Sacred Heart of Jesus hides a painting made in the turn of the 17th to the 18th century in which Michael, the archangel, is weighting the Souls he will be taking to Paradise. Along the nave's lateral walls there are a few consoles displaying images, such as Saint Nuno of Saint Mary, the Immaculate Conception, Saint Anthony of Lisbon and Saint Joseph. They are accompanied by Our Lady of Grace, the Infant Jesus Saviour of the World and, among others, Saint Thérèse of Lisieux and Saint Francis of Assisi.



DON'T MISS OUT

• 1 km: "Obras do Fidalgo" (p. 276)