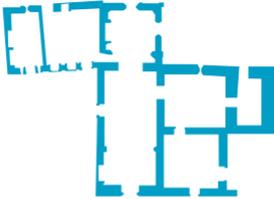


29.

**MONASTERY**  
OF SAINT  
MARY OF  
CÁRQUERE



-  Rua do Mosteiro  
Cárquere  
Resende

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-  41° 5' 14.28" N  
7° 57' 28.84" W

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-  +351 918 116 488

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-  Saturday, 5 pm; Sunday,  
8.30 and 11.30 am

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-  Saint Mary  
15<sup>th</sup> August

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-  National Monument  
1910

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-  P. 25

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**B**uilt on the northern slope of the Montemuro massif, almost within sight of the river Douro, the monastic complex of Cárquere stands out, not just for its architectural and artistic ensemble, but also by its deep connection to the early years of the Portuguese nation. Considered, at first, as being the place where the young prince Afonso Henriques (k. 1143-1185), the first king of Portugal, had been healed due to an appeal by his preceptor Egas Moniz (1080-1146) and through the intervention of the Virgin Mary, it was later turned into the pantheon of the powerful Resendes family until its dispersal, in the late 15<sup>th</sup> century.

The legends hatched by the Canons Regular who ruled this area, both in spiritual and temporal terms, until the 16<sup>th</sup> century, were part of a consolidation and promotion strategy which was meant to distinguish an estate that was naturally supported by an extensive set of land and financial assets, within a vast region to the south of the river Douro. And such wealth spoke louder when it was deemed necessary to reform the Monastery, which had been handed over to a few clergymen who were less conscious of their duties in the 15<sup>th</sup> century.

The arrival of the Jesuits in the 16<sup>th</sup> century brought about a new strength to expand and consolidate control over the Monastery of Cárquere. The ownership of Cárquere was peaceful until the 18<sup>th</sup> century, when the persecution of the Jesuits by the Marquis of Pombal (1699-1782) struck the small community perched on the thickets of the Montemuro mountain. This path, despite the vicissitudes of men and their greed, was somehow recorded in the spaces and artistic elements that defined the existing ensemble. Although the traces from the Romanesque period (dating back to the time of Egas Moniz and King Afonso Henriques) are not very expressive, we should highlight: the crevice on the Resendes lineage chapel and the tower, which is currently embedded in the

ensemble, but was once probably detached from the Church and its annexes.

Regarding the crevice on the front wall of the Resendes pantheon, we should highlight the fact that it is decorated on both sides. While a geometric language prevails inside, despite the mismatch felt in terms of the *voussoirs*' composition, it is on one of the external archivolts that we find one of its most original elements, the so-called *beak-heads* - a motif imported from the Anglo-Saxon culture which features animals that are all facing forward and curving along the arch -, carved on each of the *voussoirs*, together with plenty of graphic elements. The capitals feature the representation of birds, either with intertwined necks, or standing alone with open wings.





## THE LORDS OF RESENDE

The Resendes lineage, whose origin is placed by the nobiliaries in the children that Afonso Rodrigues - known as "Rendamor" - had with a nun who was kidnapped from the monastery of Arouca, Mor Martins, focused its activity on the region from which it took its surname, especially in Cárquere - the sanctuary they chose for their pantheon. The Resendes descended from the Baiões - from whom they inherited the coat of arms (golden, with two black passing goats placed one above the other and covered with drops of the same metal) - and the Ribadouros, whose family was connected to Egas Moniz - the so-called Governor and Schoolmaster - who was associated with Cárquere for taking part in healing the Infant Afonso Henriques, the first king of Portugal, who, legend says, was born with defective legs. Under the intercession of the Virgin, Egas Moniz brought the prince to Cárquere and, having witnessed the miracle, he was generous to the Church and the Monastery, to which he donated many legacies. The first ones who used the surname Resende were Rodrigo, Martim and Giraldo, the sons of the aforementioned "Rendamor" and the nun from Arouca. Martim's grandson, Vasco Martins de Resende, the "Troubadour", is buried here together with a son and relative of both, who was also called Vasco.

All the graves are from the Gothic period and witnessed the twilight of this family within the context of Portuguese lineages. The second wife of Vasco Martins de Resende, Maria Castro, after becoming a widow with no children, re-married and took with her the heritage left by her first husband, which was later connected to that of the Castros. This was the family that, from the 16<sup>th</sup> century onwards, took the reigns of power in the region of Montemuro.

It was this world of families and lineages that inspired Eça de Queiroz (married to one of the descendants of the Castros, Maria Emília) to write *The illustrious house of Ramires* that, in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, describes and satirises the social and political world of a rural Portugal that still saw itself reflected in that medieval universe.





Built on a granite outcrop, the defensive and manorial tower may have been built over the same period as the monastic ensemble, which some authors date back to the last quarter of the 12<sup>th</sup> century or already to the 13<sup>th</sup> century.

The ensemble's spatial distribution, both inside and outside the Church, in the area of the existing cemetery (the former cloister), reveals a Romanesque sense of space. However, what we are still able to see today when we enter the Church of Cárquere is the result of a Manueline [style also known as Portuguese late Gothic, which develops during the reign of King Manuel I (k. 1495-1521)] appropriation of the primitive Romanesque construction marked by previous Gothic interventions

that are most expressive in the chevet, with its ribbed vault and mullioned window, which is only visible from the outside. From the Manueline period, we highlight the main and north portals. The surviving mural paintings (found under the sliding altarpiece of the nave's front wall) are also coeval to the Manueline campaign (probably dating back to the 1630's or 1640's): to the right, there is a depiction of Saint Anthony and Saint Lucy and, to the other side, a series of fluttering angels.

The images of the Virgin of Cárquere and of the Virgin of Milk also belong to the medieval period. The former has been exciting the devotees' curiosity due to its size (2.9 cm high) and, especially, because it is associated with the legend



## THE VIRGINS OF CÁRQUERE



The presence of the Virgin is very strong in Cárcere; she is worshipped under two names, Cárcere itself (13<sup>th</sup> century) and the White Lady (16<sup>th</sup> century). The former evokes the early days of this Church and of the monastic institute that was preserved until the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The latter is a result of popular devotion that considered it an intercessor for newborns. In fact, both have her Son on their laps and both were seen as providers of divine aid related to childhood: the former had supposedly blessed the prince Afonso Henriques, the first king of Portugal, with an extraordinary healing and the latter was sought after by fearful mothers because, through her material (limestone), she would be able to provide their missing breast milk.

The two images are similarly represented with the Child in their arms; the Virgin of Cárcere is seating while the White Lady is standing and holding the Child with her long and slender fingers, a characteristic of Gothic sculptures.

Both images are medieval but separated by several years and different artistic sensitivities: the former is a clear example of the Virgin in Majesty, whose position on the throne and rigid presence recalls a high medieval period of avenging and watchful Christ's and Virgins. Its impressive size turns it almost into a small relic that should be protected from the most common glances. On the other hand, the naturalism of the White Virgin would surely have impressed common people, cherishing the miraculous nature of the limestone that gave it its name.

of its invention (discovery) in an isolated area near the place where the Monastery was later founded.

The Modern Period, which coincided with the presence of the Jesuits, brought about the reform and especially the Baroque style, from which we may highlight the main and lateral altars, as well as the altar of Saint Sebastian (which is currently displayed in the sacristy), all belonging to the National Baroque peri-

od [style which develops during the reign of King João V (k. 1706-1750)].

The decline of the Monastery of Cárcere began in the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century. Deprived from its guardians and with its assets exposed to greed, it was reduced to the status of parish church. Over the 19<sup>th</sup> century, society's growing secularization and laicism resulted in much of its religious heritage being sold or falling into decay.



### DON'T MISS OUT

- 4.7 km: Municipal Museum of Resende (p. 269)
- 10.8 km: Thermal Facilities of Caldas de Aregos (p. 270)