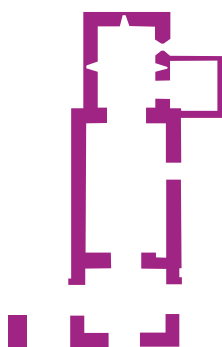




54.

CHURCH OF SAINT JOHN THE BAPTIST OF GATÃO



Largo da Igreja
Gatão
Amarante



41° 17' 48.95" N
8° 3' 47.28" W



+351 918 116 488



Saturday, 6 pm (winter)
or 4 pm (summer)
Sunday, 11 am



Saint John the Baptist
24th June



National Monument
1940



P. 25



P. 25



x

Isolated in a landscape that, until very recently, was interrupted by the Romantic railway between Livração (Marco de Canaveses) and Arco de Baúlhe (Cabeceiras de Basto) (currently turned into a nature hiking trail), the Church of Gatão is an example of the integration of the medieval churches in rural surroundings.

Even though it is marked by a stylistic hybridity that extends the chronology of its construction along the 13th and 14th centuries, this Church preserves a few Romanesque elements in the chevet which take the visitor back to the early centuries of this community. Besides the narrow crevice found on the back wall, we highlight the presence of a Lombard band on both elevations.

The chancel arch, which allows the passage (once forbidden to most people) between the smallest and more intimate space of the chancel and the nave, is another legacy of the Romanesque building, which the historian Aarão de Lacerda regarded as its “most striking sign of antiquity”. Composed of two archivolt, broken but faceted and smooth, it is surrounded by a chequered frieze. The inner archivolt rests on two columns, whose short and thick frustum shows two impressive carved capitals,



THE CORNICE ON LITTLE ARCHES

The cornice on little arches, a typically Romanesque element, appears on several monuments from the Romanesque period built along the Sousa, Tâmega and Douro valleys: the Monastery of Paço de Sousa (Penafiel) (p. 90), the Monastery of Ferreira (Paços de Ferreira) (p. 66), the Church of Sousa (p. 38) and the Church of Airães (Felgueiras) (p. 47) or the Church of Saint Martin of Mouros (Resende) (p. 126) are just a few examples. It was from the main façade of the Coimbra cathedral that this motif was propagated across most Portuguese Romanesque buildings, taking on a peculiar position within what Manuel Monteiro called the "nationalized Romanesque" style: resting on plain modillions, the cornice on little arches stands out from this family of the Portuguese Romanesque style being associated with the upper end of side elevations.



in a composition formed by botanic and winding motifs, although, and due to being different, the one on Epistle side reveals a more careful stonework. These capitals are original, but rather late and comparable to the ones from the cloister of the collegiate of Guimarães.

In the Modern Period, this Church underwent a few changes, especially on the inside, which created the image we currently

have of it: the building is marked by the granite that shows its texture both outside and inside, contrasting with other period when it was plastered and white-washed on the outside and covered with mural paintings, of which there are only a few traces, on the inside.

The mural paintings of Gatão, which survived the contemporary interventions carried out in the 20th century, still reveal in



ARTISTIC CAMPAIGNS

Indeed, both the medieval churches and the ones that underwent changes in the aftermath of the Council of Trento (1545-1563), are marked by artistic campaigns that are not always understood in light of a certain contemporary minimalism. From the medieval decorations with frescoes to the modern combination of different materials and techniques, whose height was reached during the Baroque period, the Catholic temples were always places where art was seen as a means of walking towards God.

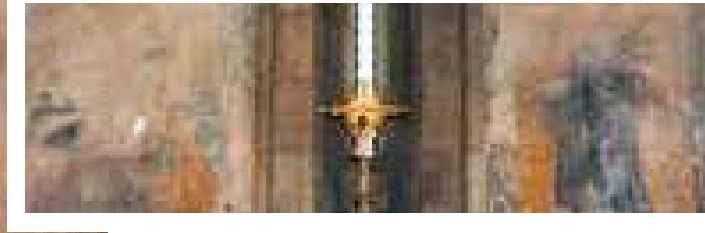
their iconography, colours and adaptation to the Church's structure, the spiritual and religious sensibility of those who commissioned, designed and kneeled before them. In the chancel, there are still two representations in good state of repair: on the Gospel side, *Christ carries the cross* with visible effort and sacrifice. Below there is an inscription, HVMILIAVIT SEMETPM VSQUE AD MORTEM. Despite being incomplete, the expression refers to the Epistle of Saint Paul to the Philippians: "Humiliavit semetipsum, factus obediens usque ad mortem, mortem autem crucis" [He humiliated himself, and was obedient until his death, a death on the cross] (Ph. 2:8). On the opposite side, the Epistle side, *Saint Anthony of Lisbon* displays his

most common attributes before the devotees: the book, the Infant Jesus standing on it, and also a fleur-de-lis, the symbol of royalty and purity.

Above the crevice, which is currently open and allows the entrance of light through the chevet, there was a representation of Saint John the Baptist, the Church's patron saint, which was taken down during the renovation works that were carried out in the 1930's. He wore the traditional garments of a hermit and was accompanied by the lamb and the pennant-cross that he, as a herald of the Good News, holds as the announcement and symbol of Life after Death.

In the nave there are still three fragments of the programme that probably covered





the entire external wall of the chancel arch: one depicting the *Calvary* (on top of the triumphal arch); another depicting the *Coronation of the Virgin* (on the left side); the last one giving us a glimpse of the moment when *Saint Sebastian was tortured with arrows* (on the right), together with *Saint Catherine of Alexandria* and *Saint Lucy*, both depicted with their iconographic attributes.

The paintings on the chancel are ascribed to an unknown craftsman or group of craftsmen from the 15th century, while the one on the nave is from the 16th century. In addition to the particularly attractive mural paintings, we must also highlight the so-called sculpture of the Virgin of the Rosary, which is venerated in the chancel. It is late 17th-century image that already shows the Baroque language, present in the damasked draperies of the clothes; however, its pose was according to older models in which the Virgin holds a rose, a pomegranate or another fruit as a symbol of purity and fertility.

The Modern Period added the galilee and the belfry to the nave, which still features a medieval structure with its narrow crevices and the composition of the south portal.

TEIXEIRA DE PASCOAES

Gatão is associated with the name of Teixeira de Pascoaes, one of the most important poets, writers and essayists in Portugal at the turn of the 19th to the 20th century. His writings deal with the idea of the human existence, with the figure of God, with the spirituality that arose from the battle between positivism and its radical nature and the nationalism that emerged in the early decades of the 20th century. He was a royalist and left a very peculiar legacy focused on the region where he was born (1877) and lived, in the shadow of the Marão mountain and overlooking the river Tâmega. He died in 1952 and was buried in the cemetery in front of the Church of Gatão.

About two kilometres away, still in Gatão, take the opportunity to visit the House of Pascoaes, a 16th-17th century manor house, to where the entire Teixeira de Pascoaes family moved when the poet was only two years old. A "house for poetry", as the Portuguese poet Eugénio de Andrade (1923-2005) would called it.



DON'T MISS OUT

- 0.04 km: Tâmega Eco-track (p. 279)