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**THE IRISH
FRANCISCANS
IN PRAGUE
1629 – 1786**

KAROLINUM



The Irish Franciscans in Prague 1629–1786

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Published by Charles University in Prague

Karolinum Press

English translation by Jana Stoddart and Michael Stoddart

Edited by Jan Suřer, Martin Světlík and Linda Jayne Turner

Cover and layout by Jan Šerých

Typeset by Karolinum Press

First English edition

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Translation © Jana Stoddart, Michael Stoddart, 2015

ISBN 978-80-246-2676-5

ISBN 978-80-246-2709-0 (online : pdf)



Univerzita Karlova v Praze
Nakladatelství Karolinum 2015

www.karolinum.cz
ebooks@karolinum.cz

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A view of the Irish Franciscan church and college in Prague. Coloured engraving by Johann Balzer and Joseph Anton Scotti, 1781 (SK). Photo Jan Pařez.

The publication of this book has been supported by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Ireland; the Franciscan Province of Ireland; and the Centre for Irish Studies, Charles University, Prague.

Sincere gratitude is due to the Embassy of Ireland in Prague, and in particular to H.E. Richard Ryan, for ongoing support of the English-language translation of the present volume.

AUTHORS' ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to thank in particular:

Ivana Čornejová of the Institute of History of Charles University in Prague for many valuable comments,

Jiří Mikulec of the Historical Institute of the Academy of Science of the Czech Republic likewise for his valuable suggestions and for his information concerning documents on the Fraternity of St. Patrick,

also

Thomas O'Connor of the Department of History of the National University of Ireland, Maynooth, for enabling us to obtain literature from Ireland, Mícheál MacCraith of the National University of Ireland, Galway, and St. Isidore's College, Rome, for providing written version of his conference speech from autumn 2000 in Maynooth,

Dáibhí Ó Cróinín of the National University of Ireland, Galway, for providing literature,

Harriett Fennell for important assistance in mediating contacts,

Helga Robinson-Hammerstein of Trinity College, Dublin, for much photocopying and advice,

Jaroslava Kašparová of the National Museum Library for drawing our attention to certain prints from the "Hibernian" library in the National Library and to the related bibliographical data,

Helena Klímová and other officials at the First Department of the National Archives in Prague for the extraordinary willingness with which they bore our often time-consuming requests,

Zlatuše Kukánová for the provision of data from the book of ordinands by
 Šimon Brož,
 Anthony Lynch for providing literature,
 Petr Maťa of the Institute of Advanced Study, Central European University,
 Budapest for data from the “Martinic Testament” (scenes from the Old
 Testament in the Martinic Palace in Prague),
 the Strahov librarian, Father Evermod G. Šidlovský OPraem, for the provi-
 sion of normally inaccessible literature from Rome and for permission to
 reproduce the Strahov materials,
 the Embassy of Ireland in Prague for the loan of literature,
 Ignatius Fennessy OFM of the Franciscan Library, Killiney for his very kind
 reception and for providing invaluable assistance and literature,
 Ladislav Záparka for the provision of historical documents,
 Zdeněk Kalvach, who was in at the beginning of everything,
 Jana and Michael Stoddart for translating this book into English,
 Father Joseph MacMahon of the Franciscan Friary in Dublin for reviewing
 the text and for many valuable suggestions,
 Linda Jayne Turner for copy editing,
 and, finally, Ondřej Pilný, Director of the Centre for Irish Studies at the
 Department of Anglophone Literatures and Cultures, Faculty of Arts,
 Charles University, Prague, for all his assistance, language support and
 making this English edition possible by coordinating the translation.

TRANSLATORS' ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We must express our grateful thanks to Father Joseph MacMahon of the Franciscan Friary, 4 Merchant's Quay, Dublin, for his resolution of many knotty problems and for his great enthusiasm for the project.

INTRODUCTION

When Queen Elizabeth of England banished the Franciscans from Ireland at the very end of the sixteenth century, she very clearly had no idea that she was indirectly responsible for one of the most intensive contacts between two small European lands - Ireland and Bohemia. Apart from the activities of the Irish Franciscans, who in Bohemia were called "hyberni" after the Latin name of their homeland, the Irish significantly affected Bohemian history in two further areas; in the less fortunate instance, this concerned the Irish officers who participated in the murder of Albrecht Valdštejn in Cheb and their successors who served in the Imperial forces, and in the happier instance, this concerned the Irish students and, above all, teachers of medicine who worked at Prague University and in Bohemia generally.

This study is an attempt based primarily on archive sources to define the place which the College of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary of the Irish Franciscans of the Stricter Observance in Prague occupied in Bohemian history and to document the activity of its members. Because we were dealing with a hitherto largely neglected theme, we concentrated mainly on domestic sources. We believe that it is only after the wealth of material present in the Czech archives has received appropriate attention that research should address the material in archives abroad.

As is evident from the survey of sources and literature and ultimately from the further text, too, it was extremely difficult to present the history of the college in the form of a simple chronological description of events. On the one hand, we had at our disposal a wealth of material relating to the period of the blossoming of the college in the second half of the seventeenth century as well as documents connected with its dissolution. On the other hand, there are long periods in the eighteenth century for which there are no written records. Some periods cannot be revealed without a study of personalities such as Anthony Bruodin or events such as the dispute about tuition at the archiepiscopal seminary, but this would lead to a serious imbalance in our study. We therefore decided that we would present the history of the Franciscan college in the form of research into various time periods. To those we have added the necessary accounts of a biographical, prosopographical and political nature.

Chapter 1 with its survey of sources and literature is followed by a summary essay on the Irish in Bohemian society, and then a chapter describing the Irish province of the Franciscans of the Stricter Observance, and the founding and first years of the college. This is linked with a section on the most famous period of the college after the middle of the seventeenth century, then a chapter describing the withdrawal of the Irish Franciscans from public life. The sixth part is a look at the ranks of the turbulent community in 1737. The final chapter deals with the dissolution of the Irish Franciscan college and the secularisation of the buildings and property in the 1780s.

Finally, a list of all the known members of the college and of the guardians is appended.

Strahov, 1 October 2001
The authors

INTRODUCTION TO THE ENGLISH EDITION

When we set about preparing the English edition about eleven years after publishing our monograph on the Irish Franciscans in Prague, we faced a difficult set of issues. These concerned, not only the current developments in research, but also decisions pertaining to translation or adaptation. To begin with, we had to consider our recent work that has focused on documents related to the dissolution of the friary and the departure of the members of its community, since this information needed to be added to the English edition. As regards new publications by Czech historians, these have centred mainly on the artistic heritage of the Irish Franciscans, the legacy left by renowned artists working both in Prague and other parts of Bohemia in the seventeenth century in particular. Similarly, the excellent edition of the diaries of the Prague Archbishop Ernst Adalbert, Cardinal Harrach, as well as recently published studies dedicated to the ecclesiastical history of mid-seventeenth century Bohemia gave us more specific or marginal information, but nothing of major import.

The extensive historiographical literature in English that had been published during those eleven years meant more difficult decisions for us. Works like the magisterial *The Irish Franciscans 1534–1990*, edited by Edel Bhreathnach, Joseph MacMahon and John McCafferty (2009) placed the Prague convent in an eminently mobile and flexible Irish Franciscan community that moved across the continent from Louvain to Rome. For the members of this community, Prague, the capital of the Kingdom of Bohemia, was one of the hubs of a dense network connecting their insular homeland with Catholic centres in continental Europe and with other emigrants who had settled on the mainland. Many an important personality passed through the Prague college. This permanent state of flux of the community, the nature of life in exile and on a mission might be surprising, not only for the general reader, but also for many a Central European historian. However, we felt that the intended Anglophone audience of the present volume would be sufficiently familiar with this perspective, and also able to readily access these remarkable studies in English.

The same holds for more recent interpretations of the history of Ireland in the seventeenth and eighteenth century. We are acutely aware that our coverage of the area is sketchy, and is based only on the sources available

to us in the 1990s. Therefore, we must beg the reader for indulgence: the primary aim of having our history of the Prague college of the Irish Franciscans translated has always been to make the copious and invaluable material from Czech and Central European archives available in English. Adapting the Czech text so that it organically incorporated the recent research of Irish historians would essentially have meant to write a new book, and address issues such as the current debates pertaining to Irish history for which we lack the expertise. The present volume thus includes updated information pertaining to discoveries made in local archives but, as regards international research from the same period, limits itself to merely referencing the most important essays by way of pointers. It is our modest hope that our work will still be found useful, and will help to fill the gaps relating to what is known internationally about the Irish Franciscans in Prague.

Strahov, 10 May 2014
The authors

TRANSLATORS' NOTE ON TERMINOLOGY

The Czech original, when referring to the Irish Franciscan institution in Prague, uses the words “klášter,” “konvent” and “kolej.” Based on present-day usage and taking into account Benignus Millett’s comments on nomenclature,¹ we have adopted “college” wherever the reference is to the Prague institution in accord with, for example, St. Isidore’s College in Rome, “friary” where appropriate for other Franciscan institutions and “monastery” where appropriate for other, non-mendicant, orders.

Also, as pointed out by the authors, the word “hybern,” from the Latin “Hybernia” (or “Hibernia”) meaning Ireland and thus “Hybernus” (or “Hibernus”) meaning an Irishman, was used by the Czechs to denote primarily (if not exclusively) an Irish Franciscan. However, to use this word in English did not seem appropriate as the word is rarely used today in English, nor does it have such a specific, relevant historical meaning. Therefore, we have translated the original title, “Hyberni v Praze,” as “The Irish Franciscans in Prague” and “Hyberni” usually as “the Irish Franciscans.”

¹ Benignus Millett, *The Irish Franciscans 1651–1665* (Rome: Gregorian University Press, 1964) 66.

TRANSLATORS' NOTES ON NAMES

The above indicates the difficulties the authors laboured under in deciding the forms in which names should be shown. In translating the text into English, we decided to render the Christian or order names into the usual English form. With the various families of the nobility, with reference to as many sources as possible, whenever we found the German form of the name widely used, we used this, otherwise we retained the Czech form. With other nationalities, we have used the original names where it has been possible to determine them. Here, too, there are exceptions where a common English form exists for well-known historical figures, for example, John Huss or John Amos Comenius.

Our main reference tool in terms of names has been Benignus Millett's *The Irish Franciscans 1651-1665*, whose example in terms of vocabulary and usage we have largely, but not slavishly, followed.

1. THE IRISH AND BOHEMIAN SOCIETY – AN IRISH ISLAND IN A BOHEMIAN SEA

THE ROAD TO EMIGRATION

The Irish began to arrive in Bohemia in greater numbers in the first half of the seventeenth century. They had left their native land primarily for religious reasons, because their Catholicism had exposed them to repression since the period of the Tudor dynasty, whose famous representative Henry VIII had begun to enforce a local form of the Reformation. Hand in hand with the suppression of the Catholic faith went the attempt by the English to bring the whole of Ireland under their control. At that time, Ireland was divided into three power-political-ethnic areas: the area around Dublin under direct English rule, known as the Pale; then that controlled by the “Anglo-Irish rebels,” local long-term English settlers who had mixed feelings about the English occupation; and that of the original Celtic (Gaelic) inhabitants who lived in a significantly different social order (laws, institutions, traditions and language). The latter were regarded by the English as enemies. Feuds were typical, not only between all the groups, but also within individual units, particularly among the Irish, for whom – in their own words – this trait is allegedly almost a national attribute.

During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the Irish, under pressure of an increasing consolidation of English power, rose up in a series of greater or lesser rebellions, all of which were unsuccessful and always worsened the existing conditions. The rebellion by Hugh O’Neill and his Ulster allies in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century ended in the Battle of Kinsale, the “Flight of the Earls” and the definitive subjection of Ireland by the English. Then came the confiscation of land held by Catholics and the Plantation of Ulster by Protestant Englishmen and especially Scots. Another rebellion instigated by Sir Phelim O’Neill at the end of the reign of Charles I was brutally ended by Oliver Cromwell after Charles’s execution and was followed by further confiscations and a wave of emigration. Confiscated property passed into the hands of Protestants. After the fall of the English Republic, during the Restoration, some returned hoping for religious freedom and the restitution of their property, but of the original three-fifths of agricultural land which had been in the hands of Catholics before 1641, only one-fifth was restored.

Although in practice it was, to a certain degree, tolerated, Catholicism hovered on the brink of illegality, and representatives of the Church were often persecuted, imprisoned and executed. After the Catholic James II ascended to the throne, the situation began to change. The first Earl and Duke of Tyrconnell, Richard Talbot, James's confidant and also a Catholic, was named the Irish Viceroy and during his rule his fellow Catholics quickly began to enter government administration. However, their imminent return to the Irish Parliament was thwarted by another coup d'état in England which led to the succession of William of Orange, James's Protestant son-in-law. James then escaped to Ireland, where he summoned the Irish Parliament which proclaimed its independence from the English Parliament. William of Orange however, landed in Ireland and, after a psychologically important defeat of James at the Battle of the Boyne in 1690, marched triumphantly through the country. Even though Catholics enjoyed limited religious tolerance and the confiscation of their property was not too extensive, after the Treaty of Limerick the following year, a great many Irish left the country and it was clear that the Catholic side had suffered a severe defeat. This soon manifested itself in practice in the Penal Laws, which turned Catholics into second-class citizens. Under the Penal Laws, they were excluded from Parliament, forbidden to hold government office, practise law or serve as officers in the army, and forbidden to buy land or rent it for over thirty-one years. Further indignities were imposed, in particular a prohibition on education at home or abroad. In much the same way as it was necessary to swear an "immaculate oath" on the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary so as to be allowed to study at university in Bohemia, in order to study in Ireland, students were obliged to publicly deny transubstantiation and renounce certain Catholic dogma as idolatry. Despite the law of 1697 exiling the Catholic clergy and a repression lasting three quarters of a century, from 1778 onwards, the Catholics gradually managed to limit discrimination.

The previous three paragraphs show that the Irish emigrated in many waves over almost two centuries. The reasons were various; Irish soldiers were threatened with execution for rebellion, the clergy were forced to train in the more peaceful setting of a country with religious tolerance or one where Catholicism was the state religion, and Catholic students had no other choice but to study at universities on the continent.

The greatest paradox of the arrival of the Irish Franciscans in Bohemia therefore remains the fact that, despite their own experience of cruel religious and social persecution in their own country, they arrived here in order, albeit indirectly, to participate in a parallel oppression, but this time in the name of "the one true faith."



Fig. 1 The assassination of Albrecht of Valdštejn in Cheb (Eger). Engraving by Matthäus Merian, 1639 (SK).

THE IRISH FRANCISCANS AND SOLDIERS

Irish emigrants who had been forced to leave their own country for the above-mentioned reasons were welcomed in, among other places, Bohemia.¹ Among the first to arrive were the Franciscans in 1629, but the beginnings of their college were enshrouded in the bloody atmosphere of the Saxon invasion. Immediately afterwards, Irish soldiers intervened in Czech history with the murder in Cheb of Albrecht of Valdštejn (Fig. 1). The Imperial officers who had participated in the conspiracy against the “generalissimus” and in his death were richly rewarded by the Emperor: Colonel Walter Buttler,² Lieutenant-Colonel Robert Geraldin,³ Captain Walter Deveroux, Captain Edmund Burke and others. In times of war, monetary rewards were converted into

- 1 For an extensive but not exhaustive list, see Ludvík Schmid, “Irská emigrace do střední Evropy v 17. a 18. století” [Irish Emigration to Central Europe in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries], *SH* 32 (1985): 189–254; *SH* 33 (1986): 247–293.
- 2 Walter Buttler of Ballinakill Castle, Roscrea belonged to the Butler family – the Earls of Ormond. His life, piety and charity were mentioned as early as 1639 by Thomas Carve in *Itinerarium R. D. Thomae Carve Tripperariensis ... cum Historia facti Butleri, Gordon, Lesly & aliorum...*, Moguntiae 1639 (SK, EV VII 64), especially pages 57–59.
- 3 Josef Janáček, *Valdštejnova smrt* [The Death of Valdštejn] (Praha: Mladá fronta, 1970); 315 gives an incorrect first name, Walter.

estates,⁴ which gradually became one of the reasons why some of Valdštejn's murderers settled in Bohemia. From the beginning, there were clearly close contacts between the Franciscan college and the Imperial officers, who not only had themselves buried in the church but also left the Franciscans sums of money or Mass endowments. Among the first known contributors appear the names of the Cheb conspirators, whose wills eloquently testify to the extensive friendly relations which prevailed among the Irish soldiers.

After the Thirty Years' War, a great number of the Irish nobility settled in Bohemia and, because only the high-born could serve as officers in the army, it was mainly from this group that Imperial soldiers were recruited. Apart from the families of the murderers of Valdštejn, that is, Buttler-Clonebough,⁵ Deveroux and Gall,⁶ there were also the D'Alton,⁷ O'Brien,⁸ MacCaffry,⁹ MacBrady,¹⁰ O'Donell,¹¹ MacEnnis,¹² Lodgman,¹³ MacAwley,¹⁴ Maquire,¹⁵ Nugent,¹⁶ Kavanagh,¹⁷ O'Reilly,¹⁸ Watlet,¹⁹ Wallis²⁰ and Taaffe families.²¹ The members of some Irish families sometimes intervened significantly in Czech history, while others played only an episodic role, such as the O'Hegerty²² or Browne families.²³ Only six of these families still lived in Bohemia in 1918.²⁴

4 See Tomáš Bílek, *Dějiny konfiskací v Čechách po r. 1618. Část druhá* [The History of Confiscations in Bohemia after 1618. Second Part] (Praha: František Řivnáč 1883) 762.

5 *Die Wappen des böhmischen Adels. J. Siebmacher's grosses Wappenbuch. Band 30* (Neustadt a.d. Aisch: Bauer und Raspe, 1979) 110 + table 59. (Further quoted as *Siebmacher*).

6 Miroslav Baroch and Ludvík Schmid, "Irská a skotská emigrace do střední Evropy" [Irish and Scottish Emigration to Central Europe], *Heraldická minucí* 1987–88 (1988): 16–17.

7 *Ibid.*, 12–13.

8 *Ibid.*, 46–47.

9 *Ibid.*, 34–35.

10 *Ibid.*, 32–33.

11 *Ibid.*, 48–49.

12 *Siebmacher*, 58–59 + table 41.

13 Baroch and Schmid, "Irská a skotská emigrace do střední Evropy," 26–27.

14 *Siebmacher*, 145–146 + table 68. Michael Adam Franck von Franckenstein wrote a genealogical work on the family, *Origines Magawlyanae*, Pragae 1736 (SK, AO II 26). The Irish Franciscan and theologian James Griffin participated as editor. See Miroslav Baroch, "Magawly Cerati," *HaG* 16.4 (1983): 220–226.

15 Baroch and Schmid, "Irská a skotská emigrace do střední Evropy," 40–41.

16 *Ibid.*, 44–45.

17 *Siebmacher*, 129 + table 64.

18 *Ibid.*, 153 + table 70.

19 *Ibid.*, 96 + table 55.

20 *Ibid.*, 186 + table 79.

21 *Ibid.*, 175–176 + table 77.

22 Miroslav Baroch and Ludvík Schmid, "Rod O'Hegerty" [The O'Hegerty Family], *HaG* 23.1 (1990): 3–16.

23 Maximilian Ulysses Browne, Baronet of Camus and Mountany, was fatally wounded in the battle with the Saxons near Prague in 1757, see Miroslav Baroch, "Irové v Čechách" [Irishmen in Bohemia], *HaG* 16.3 (1983): 188–190.

24 Schmid, "Irská emigrace do střední Evropy," 194, lists the houses of Browne, Ennis, MacCaffry, O'Donell, Taaffe and Wallis. The links of these houses with Ireland were, however, strong even

We will try to establish how the Irish officers in particular left traces in the college archive, how they attempted to safeguard the Irish Franciscan college at the time, and what their attitude was towards the Bohemian side. We will also note other Irishmen who were involved with the college, although their occupation remains unknown. The wills which enabled the Irish Franciscans to make claims, whether they were successful or not, have been preserved in the original or as a copy in the archive.

The first will to be mentioned is that of Edmund Burke, written less than a year after Valdštejn's murder, in which he bequeathed the Irish Franciscans a hundred thalers.²⁵ If the Imperial debt for the Cheb "service" were paid (which was more than the single reward of one thousand thalers that the murderers received immediately after the deed), an additional two thousand florins would go to the college.²⁶ One of the other conspirators, Walter Deveroux, who according to his will dated 1639 asked to be buried in the Church of the Irish Franciscans by St. Ambrose, bequeathed them 8,000 florins (Fig. 2).²⁷ Walter Buttler had died childless on Christmas 1634²⁸ and so over the matter of the division of his property a dispute arose which lasted many decades, known as "*causa buttleriana*." It concerned not only the newly acquired money and estates in Bohemia but also estates in Germany and Belgium. Buttler's heirs from his family gradually handed over power of attorney for the settlement of their share into the hands of their relative, Edmund O'Kennedy, court chaplain in Vienna. The first to do this was Richard Buttler (Fig. 3),²⁹

centuries later. For example, in the first half of the nineteenth century, the Taaffes built a romantic imitation of their old manor in Ballymote on their estate in Nalžov, Bohemia. Edward Taaffe became prime minister in the last decade of the nineteenth century. In the 1930s, the last member of the house emigrated back to Ireland.

- 25 NA, ŘHyb Praha, no. 18, 23.1.1635, Visenstecke? The will of Edmund Burke (Boorke) [de Burgo]. As his Colonel, he mentions Walter Deveroux and Captain Denis MacDaniel and, amongst other friends, Buttler, Stephenson, Purcell and Geraldin. To compare the value of money bequeathed with present currency is virtually impossible. To give a general idea how much it was worth, annual living expenses for one who studied at the archiepiscopal seminary were 93 florins and 20 kreuzers. One thaler was approximately two florins.
- 26 Ibid., "Item quod mihi imperator propter servitium Egraneum largitus est, inter colonellos Gal, Deverox et Geraldinum aequaliter distribuendum reliquo sub hac tamen conditione, si id acquisiverint collegio Pragensi duo millia florenorum solvant, et tria millia florenorum vexillifero meo Joanni Casey." [Item, what the Emperor owes me for my service in Cheb I bequeath to be distributed evenly among Colonels Gal, Deveroux and Geraldin on the condition that they pay two thousand florins to the Prague college...].
- 27 Ibid., nos. 31, 32, 28.12.1639, Praha. The will of Walter Deveroux.
- 28 Brendan Jennings ed., *Documents of the Irish Franciscans College at Prague. I*, Archivium Hibernicum or Irish Historical Records. Volume IX, Maynooth 1942, 171–294. On the front page and in the contents of the volume it is quoted incorrectly *Irish Franciscan Documents: Prague, I*, (further quoted as *IFD*). See no. 76, 10.1635, Praha. Gerald Geraldin tells Luke Wadding, amongst other things, that "our noble patron Coronell [!] Walter Butler ... die in the land of Vittemberg uppon Christmas holidayes...", after being ill for 11 days.
- 29 Ibid., no. 34, 10.5.1641, Opava. The will of Richard Buttler. Ibid., no. 38. There is the last will of