

Overview of Bom Sucesso Archives

Identity Statement	
Archive Reference	PT OP/BS
Web link	iar.ie/
Title	Papers of Bom Sucesso Convent, Lisbon
Creation dates	1642-2016
Level of Description	Fonds
Extent	234 boxes
Context	
Creator(s)	Members of Bom Sucesso community
Administrative and Biographical History	<p>The Convent of Our Lady of Bom Sucesso was founded in 1639 by the Dominican, Father Dominic of the Rosary O'Daly for Irish women who desired to live religious life but were unable to do so in their native land due to the restrictive laws against Catholics prevailing at that time. A generous Portuguese countess, D. Iria de Brito donated her house and property to Father Dominic. Thus the community had a home in Portugal where they could live their religious life in tranquillity. The nuns lived a strictly enclosed monastic life under the jurisdiction of the Master of the Order until 1955 with a short interruption during the 19th century when it was judged wiser to transfer to the jurisdiction of the Patriarch of Lisbon. In 1955, the community amalgamated with the Congregation of Dominican Sisters, Cabra, Ireland. By this time, the nuns were greatly involved in the teaching ministry which had begun in the early 19th century. Two foundations were made from Bom Sucesso, St Anne's (in Oeiras) and Comunidade D. Iria (in Zambujal) in 1983 and 1993 respectively. These were closed in 2002 and all the sisters came together as a community in Bom Sucesso where they lived until their departure for Ireland in August 2016.</p>

Archival History	<p>The history of Bom Sucesso archives has been a chequered one covering over three and three-quarters centuries and through regimes favourable and unfavourable to religious institutions. Over the nineteenth century especially and early twentieth century, keeping archives was quite a challenge due to interference in the running of the convent's affairs by Portuguese governments with Republican leanings. Documents were confiscated in 1823 when the community was expelled for a month from Bom Sucesso. In 1834 to 1835, further documents were confiscated and letters were written to various officials asking for the return of the archives, but with no result. From mid-nineteenth century on, the community requested and enjoyed diplomatic immunity under the British Government. Some of the archives were taken for safe keeping to the British Embassy and never returned. Subsequent applications in the 1950s to the British National Archives in Kew near London yielded no result either. Thus it happens that some documents pertaining to Bom Sucesso today are found in the National Archives in Torre do Tombo and in the archives of the Ajuda Palace, while some convent plans are supposed to exist in the Biblioteca Municipal in Campo Grande.</p> <p>A further misfortune befell the archives during the Revolution of 1910. Many original documents were purposely destroyed as the sisters feared that they might contain incriminating evidence which would lead to their expulsion from Portugal. Mother Cecilia Murray of the community in Bom Sucesso succeeded in salvaging its history from the documents remaining in the convent and retrieving copies of others from the archives in Corpo Santo, the Vatican and in the University of Coimbra in addition to the offices mentioned earlier. This activity carried out over a lifetime in Bom Sucesso has meant that the history of the community can now be told. Mother Cecilia reconstructed the annals, at least the sequence of events in the history of the convent. Other sisters also helped in restoring the archives including those who typed out transcripts of original documents.</p> <p>These archives have now been classified and are of interest for anyone wishing to study communities of Irish religious women in exile of which Bom Sucesso is now the only remaining example.</p>
Source of Acquisition	Material created and deposited in Bom Sucesso Convent, copies of original records held in Torre do Tombo, Ajuda Palace, Campo Grande, in addition to copies of records originally held in Dominican Fathers' archives in Corpo Santo, the Vatican and the University at Coimbra.
Content and Structure	
Scope and Content	<p>The first two series cover early years, the changes in jurisdiction and the governance of the convent, both external and internal.</p> <p>Personnel records are rather patchy and contain few obituaries as they were not required by the community.</p> <p>Property is an ample series, though by no means complete, covering some transactions regarding lands in Golegã and property located near the convent, also correspondence concerning the water supply to the convent and its subsequent expropriation by the municipality in 1941.</p>

	<p>The finance series covers summaries of transactions and reports sent to the Master of the Order.</p> <p>The two series, Dominican Order and religious life contain mostly papers from recent annual meetings as well as some correspondence.</p> <p>The few Hierarchy records are mainly business papers which convent must send to the Patriarch of Lisbon to comply with Concordat regulations.</p> <p>The Civil Authority papers outline the relationship of Bom Sucesso with the British Government and the uneasy tolerance of its existence in Portugal by the Portuguese authorities.</p> <p>In the Spirituality section, there is information to be found regarding the tombs of those buried in the church. The section also includes much devotional ephemera and hymnbooks used by the community.</p> <p>The documents on Ministry consist of letters concerning their first pupil, Marianne Russell Kennedy, account books, lists of permissions for sisters engaged in the ministry to go outside cloister, public examinations, visits of inspectors, the award in 1932 of a licence for pupils to follow State programmes and examinations. It also contains papers on pastoral work done by the sisters.</p> <p>Miscellaneous Correspondence means all correspondence not emanating from the Generalate or immediate superior. This series includes letters of thanks for hospitality, requests for accommodation, and references to donations of holy objects.</p> <p>The Events series includes papers from events and functions held on convent premises while the Annals cover descriptions of these events as well as the daily happenings in the lives of the sisters. Visitors' books and handwritten library and archive catalogues complete this section.</p> <p>Writings cover writings by members of the community and some other members of the congregation, dissertations and theses by students on aspects of Bom Sucesso, such as 19th century anti-clericalism and church art.</p> <p>Photographs are arranged according to people, places and events with descriptions and dates if known.</p> <p>Newspaper cuttings include references to Bom Sucesso and also to consequences of the 1974 Revolution.</p>
Arrangement	The fonds has been arranged into seventeen series, earliest documents, jurisdiction/government, personnel, property, finance, Dominican Order, religious life, hierarchy, civil authorities, spirituality, ministry, miscellaneous correspondence, events, annals, writings, photographs, newspapers.
Subject keywords	Countess Iria de Brito; Dominic O'Daly OP(1595 -1662); Dominican; Patriarch of Lisbon; Catholic; church; buildings; Irish; Portuguese
Appraisal and Destruction	All items retained permanently
Accruals	None expected

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Conditions Governing Reproduction	Reproduction is dependent on condition of original item and only with permission of Congregation Archivist. No digital photography permitted
Language/Script of Material	Latin, English and, Portuguese
Physical Characteristics & Technical Requirements	Bound volumes and loose documents. Some older legal documents consist of stitched pages and older handwriting which may be difficult to read. Careful handling is required.
Finding Aids	Descriptive list available in reading room
Allied Materials	
Links	www.dominicansisters.com