



25.

## CHURCH OF OUR LADY OF NATIVITY OF ESCAMARÃO



Rua de São Miguel  
Escamarão, Souselo  
Cinfães



41° 3' 57.66" N  
8° 15' 25.45" W



+351 918 116 488



Sunday  
9 am



Our Lady of Nativity  
8<sup>th</sup> September



Public Interest Building  
1950



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Despite its late nature, the Church of Our Lady of Nativity of Escamarão takes on particular importance due to its strategic location at the confluence of rivers Douro and Paiva. Part of the “couto” [a type of Portuguese administrative division] of Vila Meã and under the influence of the monastery of Alpendorada (Marco de Canaveses), the village of Escamarão was always an attractive crossing area located within sight of the monastery itself and with fast connections both to Porto and to the inner Douro region.

So, it was probably the monastery itself that was responsible for the construction (or reconstruction) of the Church of Escamarão, so as to ensure the religious independence of its “couto”. There are several elements in this small-sized Church that illustrate its late nature. Knowing that, in the medieval period, whether we are talking about either the Romanesque or the Gothic style, the construction of a religious building began with the chevet, the mullioned Gothic window opened on its back wall and the small rosette that surmounts the triumphal arch immediately stand out.



Although this Church adopted the massive appearance of the walls with narrow crevices in the nave, the truth is that it has been integrated into what art history has been calling the “rural Gothic” style. The portals do not feature any columns or tympana and their archivolts rest directly on the walls. However, on the archivolts of the mullioned window and of the main portal we notice the persistence of a Romanesque decorative repertoire from which we highlight the pearls, a theme that was often used in the Romanesque churches from the Douro and Tâmega basins. The Church of Escamarão stands

as combination of resistance and innovation which results in a typical example of “rural Gothic” architecture.

Despite being difficult to read, the inscription we find next to the main portal, carved in Gothic characters, alludes to the year 1385 (Era 1423). Considering its position in the building and as it does not seem to be a reuse or an inscription made in a later period, we believe that it may be associated with the completion of the Church’s construction.

The interior is dominated by granite and by the remaining liturgical furniture already designed in the Modern Period. Several testimonies report the existence, at least until the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, of a mural painting in the Church which has been dated back to the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

The frontals of the nave’s collateral altars belong approximately to the same period.





## MURAL PAINTING

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Old photographic records have allowed us to identify, on the north wall, the representation of a male figure wearing the Franciscan habit. On his left hand he is holding a book and, on the right, he is carrying a staff (?). This could be an unusual depiction of Saint Anthony of Lisbon (c. 1195-1231).



Mural painting before the restoration works (1944)

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They are Mudéjar tile panels made using the *cuenca* or *arista* technique. The polychromy of these panels, based on ochre, green and blue shades on a white background, creates standardized compositions with phytomorphic and floral motifs, thus anticipating the "carpet-type" tile trend that became very popular in Portugal during the 17<sup>th</sup> century. On the south side, the two tiles that clash with the remaining composition were put in place during the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

These altar tables display images intended to be worshipped by the devotees;

they were surmounted by Neoclassical pediments that completed an ensemble from the same period, which was disassembled during the restoration interventions carried out in the 1960's at the parish's expense and sought to emphasize the Church's medieval nature. We may still admire the National Style [1690-1725] main altarpiece from the first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Despite the regional nature of its polychromy, the coat of arms of the Benedictine Order stands out in the centre of the composition.

