

Historic connections—Waterford and Maynooth

While on a recent getaway to the oldest city in Ireland, Waterford, we had the chance to visit the wonderful Bishop's Palace to view the exhibition of Waterford Treasures. It was there we discovered some Maynooth connections.

First to come to my attention was a small portrait of Thomas Hussey (1746-1803). This rang a bell, as Thomas Hussey was involved in the establishment of St. Patrick's College Maynooth and was its first president in 1795. He later became bishop of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Waterford and Lismore in 1797. Hussey officially opened the first monastery and school of Edmund Ignatius Rice at Mount Sion in Waterford on July 7, 1803. He studied in Salamanca in Spain. Maynooth College holds the Salamanca Archives which date from 1592.

A section on Waterford Volunteers in the 1916 Rising mention Liam Ó Raogáin and Sean Ó Griobhtain both from the Rinn Gaeltacht in Co. Waterford and then working in Maynooth, Co. Kildare. They joined the Maynooth 15 on Easter Monday "evading capture they arrived at the GPO early Tuesday morning to the resounding cheers of the rebel garrison".

The present Bishops Palace, built on the site of several previous palaces was commissioned by Bishop Charles Este in 1743 to the design of Richard Cassel, who left the project to build Leinster House. He also made large alterations to Carton House between 1739 and 1745.

The Bishops Palace project was taken over by a Waterford architect-builder "Honest" John Roberts who built many of Waterford's fine buildings. There is a Maynooth connection here to John Roberts' eldest son, the landscape artist Thomas Roberts (1748-1777). From 1770, Thomas Roberts travelled throughout Ireland, particularly in the north-west, painting general and demesne landscapes. One of his patrons was William FitzGerald, 2nd Duke of Leinster who commissioned him to paint a series of six views of Carton. He completed four. His career was cut short by his death at the age of 29. Following a period of ill health, Roberts travelled to Bath in 1776 to take the spa waters and other medical treatment. On the advice of his doctor, he continued to the warmer climate of Lisbon, dying there just a few months after he arrived in March 1777.

The other two paintings in the series was completed by William Ashford in his own style.

Susan Durack



Thomas Roberts (1748-1777).
National Gallery of Ireland.



The Sheet of Water at Carton Park, Co. Kildare, with the Duke and Duchess of Leinster out walking, and gardeners rolling a serpentine path in the foreground



The Bridge in the Park at Carton with workmen landing logs from a boat



The Park at Carton with Ivory Bridge in the Foreground

Sources

[The Experience at bishops palace - Waterford Treasures](#)

[John Roberts \(architect\) - Wikipedia](#)

[Thomas Roberts, Irish Landscape Artist: Biography, Paintings \(visual-arts-cork.com\)](#)

Images: MutualArt.com, Gallery of Masters and National Gallery of Ireland