

## André Darré, an early Maynooth teacher of mathematics

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ABSTRACT. André Darré was an exiled French priest who worked at Maynooth from 1797 until 1813, when he returned to France. He taught natural philosophy from 1801 and he was responsible for providing his students with rudimentary instruction in mathematics. His main contribution to education in Ireland is the writing and publication of his book "Elements of geometry, with both plane and spherical trigonometry" (Dublin, 1813). This article explores Darré's career in Ireland, and his attempts to regain his home in the south-west of France. Our main source is letters written by Darré to a fellow exiled priest, which were published in 1910, but are probably not well known. The letters shed interesting light on the lives of French exiles in Dublin following the disruptions caused by the French Revolution.

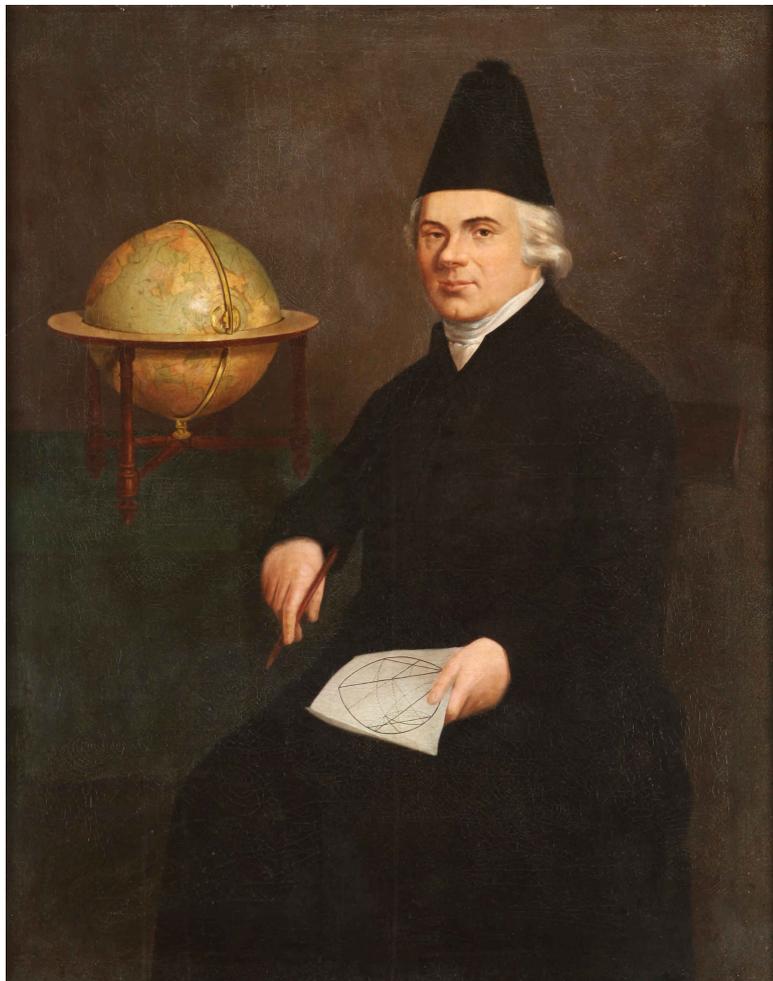
The Royal College of St Patrick, Maynooth, was established by an act of the Irish Parliament in June 1795. In the aftermath of the French Revolution, several exiled French priests found refuge in Ireland and were appointed to academic positions at the college during its early years. One such émigré was André Darré, who taught Natural Philosophy from 1801 and provided his students with a textbook on geometry in 1813, shortly before his return to his home in Auch in the south-west of France. In this essay, we will provide some details about Darré's life in Ireland, his work at Maynooth, and his subsequent departure for France. Darré is mentioned with approval in *Maynooth College: its Centenary History*, written by the Reverend John Healy in 1895 to celebrate the centenary of the foundation, [9]. Likewise, Patrick Corish in his bi-centenary history *Maynooth College 1795-1995* makes occasional reference to Darré, [5]. We will use letters written by Darré to a fellow exiled priest to give a picture of his life among a group of French émigrés led by the de Basterot family, who resided in North Cumberland Street in Dublin, and of

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his activities during the years of enforced separation from his family and friends in Auch. Not the least aspect of this story is his burning desire to end his exile, despite enjoying what appears to have been a fulfilling and successful life in Maynooth.



Darré

(Image courtesy of St Patrick's College, Maynooth)

Let us first account for the presence of French priests at the foundation of Maynooth College. We have used [10] for background information on the history of France in the late 18th century. In the wake of the French Revolution in 1789, governments in France were antagonistic to the Catholic Church, and to the Christian religion in general. By 1791, clergy in France were required to swear an oath of loyalty to what was known as the Civil Constitution of the Clergy. The provisions of the Civil Constitution required a considerable reduction in the number of bishoprics, popular election of bishops and priests, and severance of the ties that bound the Church to Rome. (In 1801, a Concordat was signed between France and the Papacy,

and subsequently there was a gradual return to the status quo ante in relations between the state and the Catholic Church in France.)

Papal authority was necessary to make the oath, but in April 1792, Pope Pius VI denounced the Civil Constitution. This led to a split in the French church, as many clergy, including seven bishops, agreed to sign, whereas many others refused. Those clergy who refused to take the oath were called *non-juring* or *refractory* priests. Legislation of August 1792 stipulated that refractory priests must either leave France or face deportation to French Guiana. Indeed, denunciation by twenty or more citizens was enough to precipitate deportation, a process which became known as the *dry guillotine*, since it usually resulted in the rapid death of its victims. The future prospects of refractory priests certainly looked bleak when over 200 of them were killed in a massacre of September 1792 during a wave of mob rule in Paris, prompted by fears of foreign invasions of France. Numerous refractory priests chose to emigrate from France, and André Darré was one of their number.

For us, Darré's most interesting and valuable contribution to education in Ireland is the writing and publication of a textbook entitled *Elements of Geometry, with both Plane and Spherical Trigonometry. Designed for the use of the Students at the R. C. College, Maynooth*. The work was printed and published in Dublin in 1813 by H. Fitzpatrick of 4, Capel Street, printer and bookseller to the college.

Let me explain my special interest in Darré and his book. In April 2017, I attended the Huxley Lecture on the History of Mathematics, given in Maynooth, and went on a guided tour of the Russell Library to see an exhibition of mathematical texts. One of the books on display was the Maynooth copy of Darré's *Elements of Geometry*. I wondered subsequently how easy it might be to obtain my own copy of this book. I checked the online bookselling site Abebooks but, not surprisingly, initially found nothing. A few days later, I checked again and, to my great amazement, discovered a French bookseller offering what appeared to be a very attractive example of the desired work. I had no hesitation in seizing what was likely to be the only opportunity to purchase this rare survival from the early days of Maynooth.

The book is attractively bound in full contemporary calf, with floral motifs in gold around the edges of the front and back boards. A binder's ticket on the front pastedown reveals that the book was

bound by a certain Davet, located at the bookseller Delcros, in the rue Camarade, near the Collège, in the town of Auch. This information suggested a link to Darré himself, since he had been employed at the Collège royal in Auch before he left France, and he returned there in 1813. Probably, Darré brought this copy of his book with him and had it bound in an elegant manner in Auch, where much of his life was spent.

Next to the binder's ticket, a bookplate indicates that this book was formerly in the library of Monsieur Jean Barada, a specialist in military, revolutionary and Napoleonic history. A Google search quickly led to Jean Pierre Barada, a politician born in Auch in 1789. While he may not have previously owned the book, the connection to Auch fits well with our theme. Further online searching showed that a certain Jean Barada was writing in 1926 in the historical and military review *Carnet de la sabretache* on the subject of letters written by an enlisted man of the Revolutionary era (sabretache is an item worn by a cavalry officer). This Jean Barada is a promising candidate to be identical with the Jean Barada named on the bookplate.

A previous owner of the book (presumably Jean Barada) has researched Darré's life and left a few relevant documents in the book for later readers to find and perhaps investigate. We will write more about this in the course of this article. Most significant for us was a thin sliver of paper, bearing writing difficult to decipher, but making reference to the French journal *Revue de Gascogne* for 1910. (The *Revue de Gascogne* was published in Auch, and its yearly volumes relate much history pertinent to the town and its institutions, especially churches and the clergy. Perusal of these journals may throw further light on Darré.) Luckily, the *Revue de Gascogne* is available online in scanned form and I discovered the relevant article is *Lettres d'un prêtre auscitain réfugié en Angleterre*, written by P. Gabent (who may have been a priest), [7]. The prêtre in question is André Darré, and thus the title of the paper is inappropriate, as Darré was a refugee in Ireland, and only briefly resided in England.

As the title suggests, the journal article concerning Darré is based on letters, nine letters to be precise, that Darré wrote to his friend from Auch, the abbé Lubis. Lubis was a fellow priest and also exiled, in his case, in Spain. Lubis had succeeded in returning to Auch by 1804 and in the later letters, Darré relates his intense desire to

come home to Auch and the vicissitudes that obstructed his return. The first letter is from Dublin, dated 17 October 1793, and addressed from 5 North Cumberland Street, Dublin (North Cumberland Street is not far from the Rotunda Hospital in north Dublin). The last letter is from Paris, dated 15 June 1813, and tells of Darré's imminent departure for Bordeaux, and then onwards to Auch.

The letters tell us something of the life of an exile in Ireland, and the first few relate news about events in France and the possibility of invasion by the allied armies of Britain, Austria, Prussia and Russia. There is also news of the extraordinary success enjoyed by the revolutionary armies of France. Darré considered the possibility of a French invasion of England to be slight, given British naval power, and he was correct in this assessment.

The last letters are more concerned with life back in Auch and the steps Darré took to repatriate himself. Indeed, for more than ten years, he devised plans to return home. It has to be said that not much information is conveyed about Darré's work at Maynooth, although one letter of 1813 does mention the geometry book. We find that Darré was well connected socially, mixing with such dignitaries as the second duke of Leinster, as well as a future prime minister of France and, apparently, the duke of Wellington.

Corish describes Darré's involvement in ending an armed uprising that occurred around Maynooth in July 1803, [5], p.45. We will be able to provide further information about why Darré might have been involved in this incident on the basis of a letter he wrote in 1804.

## 1. BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF DARRÉ

A short chronology of key events in Darré's life is given between pages 272 and 273 of [7]. While there are occasional inaccuracies in the information given, we will take certain dates as likely to be correct, since they are in general agreement with what we have found in the documents stored in the copy of the geometry book.

We read that Darré was born in the small town of Montaut on 5 February 1750. Montaut is situated in the Gers department, in the Occitanie region of south-western France. It is 31 km from Auch, the capital of the department. Auch itself is almost due west of Toulouse and was the seat of a catholic archdiocese until the French Revolution. Darré studied philosophy and theology at the university

of Toulouse. He received the tonsure (entered the clerical order) at Toulouse on 16 March 1771 and was ordained a priest at Auch on 17 December 1774.

He was appointed parish priest of Saint-Cricq, near Auch, on 11 October 1790, vacating the position at the time of his exile in 1792 or 1793. He was also a teacher of philosophy at the Collège royal d'Auch, but we are not certain when he was first appointed. Following his return to Auch in 1813, he taught at the seminary in the town and was appointed a titular canon at the cathedral in October 1823. (He probably taught at the seminary as well before he left France.) He died at Auch on 30 January 1833, a few days short of his 83rd birthday.

We do not have any details about how Darré found refuge in Ireland or even when he embarked on his exile. The exodus of refugees from France reached its greatest intensity in the autumn of 1792, not least because of the fear of death, imprisonment or deportation, and we surmise that Darré departed his native land during this time of frightening persecution. In his letter of 17 October 1793, he relates that the previous winter (1792-93), he earned 50 gold louis by giving French lessons and he hopes to resume his teaching activities next winter. In the same letter, Darré writes that he has spent the month of August 1793 at the home of a rich lord, in the centre of the Irish countryside, but his host died a week after Darré's departure from his castle. Certainly, therefore, Darré was established in Ireland by the summer of 1793.

The Trustees of Maynooth College appointed him professor of logic, metaphysics and ethics at their meeting to decide staff appointments on 27 June 1795 (two days after the college president had been appointed). Healy states however that Darré did not begin his professorial duties until 1 May 1797, [9], p.200. We do not know why Darré took up his chair late, but the delay may relate to his naturalization, as we shall describe in the following section.

The Trustees had intended to establish a chair of mathematics at the foundation of the college, but no appointment was ever made to this chair. Instead, the Natural Philosophy course included topics in elementary mathematics, such as algebra, geometry and conic sections. The first professor of Natural Philosophy was another exiled French priest, Pierre-Justin Delort. He began his lectures as soon as he took up his position, on 6 October 1795, although his

initial class consisted of only three students. In February 1801, Delort took leave of absence from the college for an approved period of six months, and Darré assumed Delort's teaching duties. Delort neglected to return to Maynooth, despite entreaties from the Trustees, and on 1 October 1802, Darré was formally appointed to the vacant professorship.

House of Commons reports of 1808 indicate that Darré received a salary of 85 pounds per annum, together with commons, lodging and the cost of coal and candles. The president of the college, Dr Byrne, by contrast, received 227 pounds and ten shillings, with additional advantages, such as the use of a servant.

## 2. NATURALIZATION IN 1796 AND THE DE BASTEROT FAMILY

We came across an unexpected source concerning André Darré in the course of internet searching, namely, *Letters of denization and acts of naturalization for aliens in England and Ireland, 1701-1800*, [12]. In Appendix V, p.239, we find that on 8 July 1796, Darré was naturalized as an Irish (or British) citizen in the Court of Chancery, Dublin. The entry reads: *Andrew Darré, a French emigrant priest, native of the city of Montant [sic, Montaut] in the province of Gascony, France, formerly Professor of Philosophy in the Royal College of the city of Auch, and a parish priest in the same city, but now of North Cumberland Street in the city of Dublin.*

In addition to Darré, there are records of the naturalization of former French citizens, resident either in North Cumberland Street, or in nearby streets, and two of these are relevant to Darré. On 8 July 1796 there appears *Bartholomew de Basterot, Knight, and late a member of the Parliament of Bordeaux, France, and one of the Councillors of Lewis the Sixteenth, late King of France, but now of North Cumberland Street, Dublin.* A few days later, on 19 July 1796, we see the name of *James de Basterot, of North Cumberland Street, Dublin, Esq.* Somewhat curiously, Bartholomew de Basterot is listed as having already been naturalized on 1 July 1795. The reason for this duplication is unclear, unless a mistake in the legal process had occurred.

The parliament (*parlement*) of Bordeaux, mentioned above, was a court of final appeal in the French judicial system. There were thirteen such parlements in France, with the most important in Paris. The parlements were abolished in 1790.

The de Basterot name is important for our account, as it occurs in a letter of 1 March 1794 that Darré wrote to the abbé Lubis. Darré recounts that he enjoys the company of a circle of French people in Dublin, and resides in the home of a French family. Unfortunately, his hostess, Madame de Basterot has just died at the age of 27, to Darré's great consternation and sadness. She was the second wife of Bartholomew (Barthélémy) de Basterot, and James (Jacques) de Basterot was the son of Bartholomew and his first wife, Frances, née French.

The de Basterots were part of a wealthy family resident in Bordeaux, who had left France in 1792. They have been well researched by genealogists and historians interested in Co. Galway landed gentry, such as the Frenchs and O'Briens, who were related by marriage to the de Basterots. We shall use the genealogical sources [3] and [8], as well as [2], to tell how the de Basterots came to be in Ireland, and how their life in Ireland evolved. Their story will help to illuminate Darré's story, and provide details of the milieu in which he moved.

An indispensable source for our exploration of the de Basterot family is the memoir *Souvenir d'enfance et de jeunesse*, [2], published in 1896 by Count Florimond de Basterot (we shall abbreviate this name to FdB). FdB (1836-1904) was the great grandson of Bartholomew de Basterot and grandson of James de Basterot. More details about him will emerge as we pursue our course, but we want first to explain the presence of his ancestors in Dublin in the 1790's.

Chapter 1 of FdB's memoir provides us with valuable information that fleshes out Darré's bare bones account of life in Dublin in the 1790's. We did not find perfect accord with the facts related, but then FdB wrote one hundred years after Darré. Darré's name is not mentioned in the memoir but we are able to form some idea of the nature of the society in which Darré lived between 1793 and 1796.

The story begins with a certain James French, a wealthy Irish gentleman who owned extensive estates around Duras (also written as Dooras or Durus), near Kinvara, in Co. Galway. French was born in 1716 and, as a wealthy Catholic living during the penal times, he was aware of the precariousness of his position in Ireland. He chose to live as little as possible in his homeland, preferring to reside with his family in Bordeaux. His daughter Frances (Fanny) married Bartholomew de Basterot in 1770. Bartholomew was the son Jean Baptiste de Basterot (1710-1786), who was president of the

parlement at Bordeaux for almost fifty years. Jean Baptiste owned various mansions and chateaux, as well as estates in the winegrowing region of Médoc. Frances died in 1775 or 1776, leaving Bartholomew with one child, his son James.

Before the death of his father, Bartholomew made a second marriage, this time to Marguerite Ursule de Sans, a rich orphan, born in Saint-Domingue to parents from Bordeaux. Saint-Domingue was the French name of the western half of the island of Hispaniola, and is now the country of Haiti. It was a French colony during the 18th century, where a black slave labour force produced much of France's sugar and coffee. Fortunes were made in Bordeaux by trade in slaves and the importation of goods from Saint-Domingue. A slave revolt broke out in Saint-Domingue in August 1791, and the country was the scene of much military conflict between slaves and the armies of Britain, Spain and France, fighting each other. The independent country of Haiti emerged in 1804.

James French is reported to have settled the large sum of 500,000 francs on his daughter as her dowry. At the time of his death in 1786 only an insignificant part of the dowry had been made over to the de Basterots, but Bartholomew and his son believed that they were still entitled to this money, despite the death of Frances. With the outbreak of the Revolution, which made life dangerous for aristocrats, the de Basterots decided to come to Ireland to press a legal claim to the Duras estates of the deceased James French. They sailed from Pauillac (a small town in the Médoc region) in an English vessel, perhaps in the summer of 1792. They only just left Bordeaux in time, for soon after their departure, many former members of the Bordeaux parlement were imprisoned and subsequently executed. (In July 1792, non-juring priests in Bordeaux were facing summary death at the hands of unruly mobs, but the worst of the revolutionary violence in Bordeaux occurred in 1793 and 1794.) The slave revolt in Saint-Domingue would have rendered the estates there worthless, and this might well have encouraged the voyage to Ireland. Subsequently, as fugitives from France, their estates around Bordeaux would also have been forfeited until the time of the Bourbon restoration, and even then, only partial compensation was made available for estates sold to others.

FdB's memoir converges briefly with Darré's account in his letter of 1 March 1794 and we are able to make a good connection between

Darré and the de Basterot family. Darré informs his correspondent that Madame de Basterot's husband is engaged in a law suit, worth a considerable sum of money to his family, and the pursuance of his claim, more so than the Revolution, has brought him to Ireland. Darré observes that justice in Ireland, while ten times slower and thirty times more expensive than it was in France under the regime of the parlements, will eventually grant him all or part of what he is seeking, as he has an incontestable right in the eyes of the judges themselves. Nonetheless, it may happen that Monsieur de Basterot has to go to Saint-Domingue, where his wife had valuable residences, whose rents he now enjoys, to restore the residences if they have been devastated (during the revolt) and to administer them. Darré even confides that he may accompany de Basterot on his mission, although this event is by no means certain and can not take place for at least a year. We would comment here that such a plan seems highly implausible, as Saint-Domingue was surely in a state of chaos by this time and extremely dangerous for outsiders.

Returning to the memoir, FdB writes that his great grandfather established himself in a house with a big garden located in the north suburbs of Dublin. This is probably 5 North Cumberland Street, although the address is not given. He seems to have integrated into Dublin life quickly, as he was given a commission in the Rotunda Division, part of the Dublin Militia. He was well received by aristocratic society, which was very favourable to exiles, and became friendly with members of the Beresford family, whose chief was the marquis of Waterford. Bartholomew's house became a centre for émigrés less fortunate than himself. One such émigré was the abbé de Broglie, who is said to have been Bartholomew's commensal for more than a year (commensal means that they shared meals—we do not know if they lived in the same house). The de Broglie family is an aristocratic one in France and FdB wonders about the relationship between this abbé de Broglie and the current duke. It is a pity for relating this history that it is not the abbé Darré mentioned, but we do at least see the presence of well connected French priests in the Dublin society in which Darré and the de Basterots found themselves.

We observed two discrepancies in the accounts of Darré and Florimond de Basterot. FdB says that Marguerite de Basterot was delicate and could not stand the rainy Dublin climate, and that she

died in 1795. We know from Darré's letter that she died in early 1794. Darré also states that her sister was an Ursuline nun who lived with him and his companions. FdB on the other hand says it was Bartholomew's sister who was an Ursuline nun, called Félicité. We are more inclined to believe this version, as FdB gives further details, such as the fact that she had become deranged on being expelled from her convent in France, and that she lived with her brother for several years at the Duras estate, where her main company took the form of caged bullfinches and goldfinches.

Both sources agree that the legal proceedings against the French estate at Duras were expensive and slow moving. The matter was not settled in the de Basterot favour until 1796. Indeed, such were the costs that a substantial portion of the Galway estate had to be sold, to Robert Gregory of Coole Park, and Mark Lynch of Galway. FdB mentions that he had in his possession at Duras a single lawyer's account, which amounted to more than 30,000 francs, so Darré was correct in his assessment of excessive fees. FdB also refers to his great grandfather's naturalization, necessary since foreigners would otherwise have to wait several years before they could hold property in Ireland.

It is not pertinent, as far as we know, to Darré's life story, but the later history of the de Basterot family is worthy of a brief description here. Following the successful action in the courts of law, James de Basterot lived in the remaining part of the Duras estate with his wife, Adelaide, née O'Brien, who came from Fairfield, a house near Aughrim, in Co. Galway. They had one son, also Bartholomew de Basterot (1800-87). He and his mother were forced to sell much more of the estate in 1850, after the death of James in 1849. Bartholomew de Basterot spent most of his life outside Ireland and died in Italy. He served in the French diplomatic corps, and was ennobled as a baron. He is known for his book on chess, *Traité élémentaire du jeu des échecs* (Paris, 1852). He married a French woman of noble birth, and had a son Count Florimond de Basterot, whom we have already introduced. Born in Paris, Florimond was a noted traveller in the Americas, and wrote an account, *De Québec à Lima*, in 1860. He was an aesthete and well connected in literary circles, both in France and Ireland. He resided part of each year in Duras, and died there. It was at Duras House in 1897 that discussions took place to start an Irish national theatre. The participants included Augusta,

Lady Gregory, whose home was the nearby Coole Park, and William Butler Yeats, who often stayed with her at Coole.

Further light on the de Basterot family and their connection to Co. Galway is shed by Jerome Fahey in [6]. There is an anonymous oil portrait in the National Gallery of Ireland, entitled *Monsieur le Comte de Basterot*, not currently on display. In terms of the style of dress and hair, it is dated to 1815-25, and it portrays a man in his thirties or early forties. On this basis, it is thought to represent James de Basterot (although we are not sure if he was entitled to be called comte). The painting was presented in 1978 by Mrs J. Smith, and thus is not obviously related by descent to the de Basterot family. A reproduction of the portrait, which is not available on the gallery's webpage, is found in [3]. Interestingly enough, James is described by Fahey as a talented artist, but we are unable to say if it is a self portrait.

### 3. DARRÉ'S LETTERS OF 1793-1813

We shall now summarize what we think are interesting or relevant parts of Darré's letters to the abbé Lubis. As there is far too much material to describe in an article of this nature, where the emphasis is mainly on Maynooth College and Darré's life in Ireland, we have chosen to concentrate on a few topics.

The letter of 17 October 1793 informs us that he enjoys reasonably good health, and has agreeable company. His French lessons provide for his basic needs, although during the summer, the rich people, among whom he finds his clients, are away on holiday in the country (and presumably his earning prospects are negligible). He remarks that his expenses are so dear that, if he had to pay for his lodgings and food, the 50 gold louis he had earned would have been too little for even a very reduced upkeep.

As a postscript to the letter, he gives the frightful news that he has just been informed of the condemnation and execution of the Queen of France. Now, as Marie Antoinette was executed on 16 October 1793, and the letter is dated 17 October 1793 (although the postscript might be slightly later), we see that international news travelled fast, even under the restrictions placed on countries at war. Furthermore, Darré has learned that people in France who receive letters from enemy countries are liable to arrest, and he therefore

intends not to write to his family and friends in France, for fear of placing them in danger.

The second letter is dated 1 March 1794, and it is the letter that we have already quoted, as it makes the connection between Darré and the de Basterot family. It deals with such topics as the activities (and inactivities) of the allied armies raised against France, the existence of Irish supporters of the Jacobins and their sometimes overzealous support of democratic principles, conditions in France, with the possibility of famine, the constitution of the French army, rumours of a French invasion of England or Ireland, together with some news of his own life. He notes that there is little financial support in Ireland for émigrés. We comment that this contrasts with the case in England, since the government there provided accommodation for exiled clergy and gave an allowance of two pounds a week for priests, and ten pounds for bishops. This largesse was partly prompted by the declaration of war between Britain and France in February 1793. See [11], p.34.

Darré expects his own situation will improve as he becomes better acquainted with the language of the country, which he only knows imperfectly and can hardly speak or follow when spoken. He also describes a good meal he enjoyed in the company of three exiled French nuns, one of whom is the Ursuline, Félicité. He joined them in a game of whist afterwards. He asks plaintively whether a little recreation is forbidden to unfortunate exiles.

The third letter in the sequence is dated 13 August 1794. Darré is replying to a letter sent by Lubis from Spain on 12 June, which he had received on 7 August. Despite the prevalence of warfare, it was still possible to send and receive mail from abroad. There is no news of Darré's life in the letter. Instead, there is sadness expressed about the fate of exiled priests and despair about the success achieved by the French revolutionary armies in their battles against the European powers, who have not acquitted themselves well. There is a brief mention of the all-powerful Robespierre, who, proud of the military victories, refuses to make peace, even though the exhausted people want it. (Robespierre was in fact executed on 28 July 1794, a few days before this letter was written.) Darré takes some comfort from news that in his part of France, there is a tranquillity compared with elsewhere and fewer political prisoners than in other towns of the kingdom.

No further letters written by Darré were known to the author Gabent from 1794 until 1803. By 1803, order had been restored to France and exiles were hoping to return to their homeland. On 29 June 1803, Darré wrote to Mademoiselle Lubis, sister of his correspondent, living in the rue du Caillau, in Auch. The letter is not published but we are informed that Darré expresses a strong desire to return home, where his parents and brothers and sisters are still living. For some reason that he does not make known, he is unable to leave Ireland at that time.

Darré's fourth published letter is dated 1 November 1804 and it does provide us with more news of his life in Ireland. He congratulates the abbé Lubis on his return to Auch, where he is reunited with his sister, Mademoiselle Lubis. Darré had left a quantity of books in Auch with a certain Doctor Cortade, who has just died. Darré asks Lubis to visit Madame Cortade, offer his condolences, and request that the books be consigned to him. He also informs Lubis that he is making provisions for the financial well being of his (Darré's) sister, based on the money he has earned and saved in Ireland.

He writes that his holidays have just finished. He has passed more than six weeks with two young gentlemen who invited him to accompany them and have paid every expense. They travelled more than 300 leagues in a carriage to visit the towns and curiosities of the south of Ireland (a league measures about 3.5 miles). Three years ago, he visited the most beautiful part of the north of Ireland. Two years earlier, he made a journey to London and passed through all of England. These two other trips were made at his own expense and were very dear, but also indispensable. The trip to the north was for the good of his health and that to England was made with the intention of passing on to France. Darré did not make the voyage to France, as the British minister advised him to delay further, and he regrets now having taken his advice. If we understand this correctly, Darré is referring to the time when the Treaty of Amiens was in operation, and many British people travelled to France for sight-seeing opportunities. We wonder why Darré hesitated. Certainly, some French émigrés were able to repatriate themselves during this interlude in hostilities.

There is some interesting news about Darré's life in Maynooth in this letter. Darré confides to the abbé Lubis that just a few days

ago, he lost a good friend, the most important that he had, the duke of Leinster, whom he describes as the premier nobleman in the country. Darré states that he was intimately attached to the duke and his family. His castle is only 25 minutes away from the college and Darré dined there at least once a week. The duke has left an immense fortune in property. Darré joined the long funeral cortege that led to the duke's burial place, on his lands seven or eight leagues from the college. (We remark that there is a portrait of William Fitzgerald, 2nd duke of Leinster (the duke in question) in the National Gallery of Ireland.)

We add a few pertinent comments of our own here. The duke of Leinster had died on 20 October 1804, 11 or 12 days before this letter was written. He was a good friend of Maynooth College, which was built on land leased from him. Healy relates that Dr Delahogue, a French-born professor of dogmatic divinity at Maynooth, was also a great favourite with the Leinster family and frequently an honoured guest at Carton House, where he must surely have met Darré, [9], p.193.

The duke and Darré figure in an incident that occurred in 1803. An armed uprising was planned to take place around Maynooth on 23 July, perhaps leading to further action in Dublin. It is said that the duke was informed of the likelihood of a rebellion and informed the authorities in Dublin Castle. The position of the rebels in Maynooth rapidly became hopeless and they tried to avail of an offer from the duke to surrender and disperse without repercussions. Darré took part in negotiations that led to the surrender of the rebels on 25 July. This involvement may be related to his friendship with the duke, who was well known for his liberal politics and sympathy for nationalist causes. Attempts were made to implicate the college in the uprising, not least because of Darré's intervention, but rumours of collusion were probably entertained mainly by people who disapproved of the existence of the college in the first place. One can read more about the insurrection in [4], but there is no more information about Darré's part in the surrender beyond what we have related above.

Darré's fifth letter of the series is dated 5 February 1805 and written from Maynooth. He writes that there have recently been peace proposals between the warring nations, and if these have a happy conclusion, he is irrevocably decided to return to his home country,

and even if the war continues, he is still determined to make his way to Gascony. The other main topic of the letter is discussion of the difficulties of recovering his books from Madame Cortade and how to circumvent the problems that have arisen.

The sixth letter is dated 27 July 1807. It seems that there have been problems having letters delivered to France, and Darré has entrusted a packet of letters to a friend who is travelling to Bordeaux on a neutral ship. Concerning his intended return to France, Darré hopes that peace with Britain will follow the armistices made by the French with Prussia and Russia, and then he will be able to travel. He will not embark during the winter because of the danger of storms at sea and his tendency to be sea sick. He will leave for certain at the beginning of the spring, provided he can find a port where he can disembark.

He has recently met in Dublin Madame the countess MacCarthy, from Toulouse, whom he knew before his exile, and she has brought him news of friends in France. She has travelled to Ireland also in pursuance of a lawsuit. Darré has just started two months of holidays at the beginning of July. He has spent most of his time staying with friends in Dublin; he sees this as a small advantage in a country where everything is priced exorbitantly.

The next letter was written on 12 January 1810. Darré laments that he has tried a hundred ways to return to France, each time without success. He will now try a new method, the only one that can succeed in the circumstances. He is writing to General Dessolles, and is sending Lubis an unsealed copy of the letter, which he asks him to read. Darré would have written directly to the general but he has read in the newspapers that Dessolles is leading a division of the French army in Spain. (We are not sure what Darré intended Lubis should do with the letter, perhaps merely to comment, as the original letter had not yet been sent.)

We will now try to explain the motivation for this proposed course of action and provide a context for General Dessolles. Jean-Joseph, first marquis Dessolles, was born in Auch in 1767, and his family, especially his mother, were personally known to Darré. Dessolles was a distinguished soldier and politician, serving as prime minister of France for most of the year 1819 (one of the main streets in Auch is named in his honour). The family was aristocratic, forming part of the *noblesse de robe*, a more recent subdivision of the French

nobility. The family name was originally de Solles, but took the more bourgeois form Dessolles after the Revolution. The general served with the army in Italy, and, as indicated in Darré's letter, led a division in Spain between 1808 and 1810, returning to France in February 1811. Thus Darré was probably correct in not trying to send the general a copy of his letter when it was written. Darré proposes instead to write to the general's mother, hoping that she will pass on his requests to her son. His letter to Lubis contains a version of the letter he intends to send to Madame Dessolles, although he admits that he does not even know if she is still alive.

In the letter, Darré implores her to bring to an end his eighteen unhappy and painful years of exile. To this end, he begs that she intervene with her son to seek a passport from the French government. Darré is enclosing the necessary documents and addresses to obtain the desired passport. He remarks that a passport of the type he requires can be obtained, as Madame MacCarthy of Toulouse, whom we mentioned above, has just left Ireland with such a document. Indeed, Madame MacCarthy has promised to help him obtain the desired passport but Darré admits that he has more confidence in obtaining it through the efforts of Madame Dessolles and her son.

The author, Gabent, of the article has no idea whether Darré's letters to General Dessolles and his mother ever reached their destination, but, in any case, the passport was not forthcoming and Darré was unable to quit the mists of Ireland for another three years. Gabent is of the opinion that the disappointments of the failure of all his efforts led to a crisis in Darré's health, and he was seriously ill in 1812.

Miraculously, on 27 January 1813, Darré was able to write that he had finally received the eagerly sought-after passport. In the eighth letter of the sequence, he describes how he is recuperating from an illness that brought him to the edge of the grave, and states that his brother will provide Lubis with the details. By order of his doctors, Darré is restricting himself to moderate occupations of the mind. In addition to writing letters to France, he is replying to all the expressions of concern on the subject of his recovery, and has even taken up again the exercises for his teaching class. Of especial interest to us, he tells his correspondent that he has undertaken the printing of a small volume of mathematics, in the English language,

the manuscript of which he had prepared a long time before the illness.

We remark here that, in view of his imminent departure for France, Darré's declaration in the published preface of his book, that he has *the intention of enlarging it, at some future period, and making it a complete Elementary book on Mathematics, by the addition of the Elements of the various branches of the Arithmetical and Algebraical Calculation, and the Conic Sections* seems less than sincere. He continues, just as unconvincingly, that *My treatises on the different branches of physics, which I have composed for the use of, and adapted to the established course of Studies in the College, shall also be published in succession*. This remark, which we have transcribed as written, and which does not make complete sense, suggests that Darré may have made use of lecture notes already in his possession from his teaching days in France.

Continuing with the letter, Darré intends to leave towards the middle of the spring, and would like to travel directly to Bordeaux. He fears however that he will have to traverse the whole of England, cross to Morlaix (in Brittany), and then cross all of France (in fact, he sailed to Le Havre). He ends by anticipating the happiness of embracing his dear friend once more.

Healy records in [9] that Darré was granted a year's leave of absence from the college by the Trustees on 3 February 1813, in view of his fragile state of health and his need to rest and recover. They resolved to give him a year's salary, paid in advance. The Trustees may have been surprised to learn that Darré almost certainly had no intention of returning, although, equally, they may have guessed what his true intentions were.

The ninth and final letter is written from Paris on 15 June 1813. Darré has already written from Le Havre to his brother in Auch and expects to arrive shortly. He will travel by stagecoach to Bordeaux, partly because he has business there, and partly because he wishes to continue his voyage with three gentlemen from Béarn (in the Pyrenees), who have accompanied him from London.

Darré goes on to relate that he has spent a couple of days with General Dessolles, who has a pleasant country house a few leagues from Paris. The general was walking in his gardens and recognized Darré immediately. He has also visited some of the principal features of Paris, but has seen enough, as he is anxious to return to Auch.

This concludes our story of André Darré, based on his own words, but, in the next section, we present a little more about what happened to him following his return to Auch.

#### 4. DARRÉ'S RETURN TO AUCH

We mentioned in the opening section that various documents had been placed in the copy of Darré's textbook that we purchased. The most significant of these is entitled *Bulletin de renseignements. Académie de Cahors*. Bulletin de renseignements might translate as *newsletter*. Cahors is a town in the south west of France, north of Toulouse, and is the capital of the Lot department.

We do not know the significance of the Académie de Cahors in Darré's life story. The document itself gives a very brief synopsis of his life, both before 1789 and at the present. It is not entirely certain when the document was compiled, but as Darré's age is given as 66 years, the year 1816 is most likely. A date of 1814 has been written in crayon on the recto of the document, but not in a contemporary hand, and we speculate that this date is incorrect.

The document affirms that Darré was born in Montaut. It also states that he entered into public instruction (teaching) in 1777. The verso bears writing in ink by a later hand. It seems to have been compiled on the basis of a study of the archives relating to police activities in the Gers department in 1813. We again speculate that it may have been written by an interested party such as Jean Barada. It appears that Darré was a person under some suspicion by the state authorities, on account of his long absence abroad.

We read that on 23 July 1813, the Duc de Rovigo, Minister of Police in the French government, has requested details about André Darré from the prefect of Gers. The Minister notes that Darré was born in Montaut, was a priest at Saint-Cricq, and a teacher of philosophy at Auch. In accordance with what we have already narrated, he notes that Darré disembarked at Le Havre in June 1813 and was authorized to return to his family. The Minister invites the prefect to monitor Darré's conduct because of his long stay abroad.

The prefect replied on 30 July that Darré is not on the list of émigrés, that he has professed philosophy at a college in Ireland, and that he is one of the most estimable priests in the diocese. (It is possible that there were official lists of undesirable émigrés, whose return to France was not encouraged.) Furthermore, Darré

lives in Auch, with Monsieur Lubis. (The address given seems to be au Caillaou; this bears some resemblance to the Rue du Caillau, where Lubis's sister was residing in 1803, according to the unpublished 1803 letter. Possibly, both spellings are wrong.) Thus, there is further confirmation that Darré was reunited with his faithful correspondent.

It may be of interest to know that the Duc de Rovigo was René Savary (1774-1833), who served as Minister of Police from 1810 to 1814. He was a successful soldier and diplomat, and a loyal supporter of Napoleon, who ennobled him in 1808.

Gabent's article contains a further story concerning Darré's resumed life in Auch. This story is somewhat imprecise and apocryphal, but may contain a core of truth. The (future) duke of Wellington led a coalition of British, Portuguese and Spanish armies from Spain into the south of France in the autumn of 1813. They had reached Toulouse by April 1814, but the operations were curtailed soon after by the surrender of Napoleon, who had been fighting in Germany, and the signing of a peace treaty in May 1814.

It seems that the British army under Wellington's command entered Auch sometime in the spring of 1814 and paraded in the town square. According to Gabent, Darré, who was present, went up to the duke and presented his compliments. Darré was greeted cordially by the duke, who clearly knew him. Gabent goes so far as to speculate that the town was spared from inhumane treatment by the invading soldiers on account of this meeting of old acquaintances, but on the basis of circulars that were published in advance of the invasion, it appears that Wellington was anxious to behave as graciously as possible if the populace did not resist. Gabent speculates that Darré may have met Wellington during the latter's appointment as chief secretary to Ireland between 1807 and 1809 (Gabent's chronology of 1805-1808 is somewhat wrong here). It is certainly true that Wellington had strong family ties to Ireland, as he was born there, and married his Irish-born wife in 1806.

## 5. COMMENTS ON DARRÉ'S *Elements of Geometry*

Our interest in Darré was sparked by the fact that he had written an early textbook on geometry, specifically for his students at Maynooth. The published letters have not given us much insight into his teaching or his writing of the book, although they have opened

up aspects of his life in Ireland hitherto little known. Gabent does provide us with one anecdote concerning the book and its role in the science curriculum in Maynooth.

In 1870, two nephews of Darré, both of whom were priests living in the vicinity of Auch, attended the First Vatican Council in Rome. One day they visited a church in the city, where they met a bishop, who entered into conversation with them. He proved to be Irish. They told him they had an uncle, who used to talk to them of Ireland and who had spent 18 years there as a professor at Maynooth. “This must be Darré”, the bishop replied. “Your uncle has left us with the reputation of a scholar; I learnt my mathematics from his treatise; we don’t know a better one in Ireland and it is still found in the hands of students and teachers in Maynooth”. The Reverend Nicholas Callan had brought out a revised and improved version of Darré’s text in 1844, and it was to this that the bishop was probably referring.

Let us conclude this essay by giving an appraisal of Darré’s text. Barry and O’Farrell make a brief mention of Darré in [1]. They opine that *The organisation of Darré’s text leaves something to be desired, even apart from the quality of the English, for which he frankly begs indulgence*. Certainly, some of his terminology does not seem standard. The title *Elements of Geometry* suggests some adherence to Euclid’s model, but as Barry and O’Farrell observe, Darré makes little attempt to follow the Euclidean postulates and his proofs are occasionally inadequate. There is also some discussion of Darré’s work in [9], provided by Reverend Dr Lennon of Maynooth, but the focus is mainly on Euclid’s shortcomings and not on Darré’s merits.

One strong impression that strikes us on reading Darré’s text is an emphasis on numerical work. This was relatively uncommon in geometry textbooks before the 19th century, especially those based on Euclid, which were largely deductive and eschewed the use of such concepts as angle measurement or solving triangles. On p.120, he mentions *Hutton’s tables* (London, 1811) as an aid to calculations. On p.52, Darré has a discussion on  $\pi$  (not so denoted) and methods of approximating it. A substantial part of the text is devoted to plane and spherical trigonometry, subjects which might be considered to be more practical, say for a surveyor or astronomer. There is also a feeling that Darré had his students of natural philosophy

in mind, as he mentions topics from hydrostatics to illustrate uses of mathematics.

It would be instructive to know what authors Darré studied in France and how these may have influenced his approach to writing a textbook in geometry, especially one that did not follow the English-language tradition of little or no deviation from the classical text. We described letters of 1804 and 1805, in which Darré sought to recover his library left in Auch, several years before his return. This suggests that he may have had a substantial library, one that conceivably contained mathematics books he had studied or used in his teaching at Auch.

A possible influence on Darré's approach to teaching geometry is the book *Éléments de géométrie* by Alexis-Claude Clairault (1713-1765). This was first published in Paris in 1741 and thus may have been seen, and even studied, by Darré. It was an influential text that advocated an intuitive approach, using problems of land measurement, to motivate concepts and propositions in geometry. Without such motivation, it was felt that many students might struggle with the more traditional, dogmatic approach, generally favoured in Britain and Ireland. (An English language translation of parts of Clairault's book was available to pupils at Irish National Schools by 1833, but not at the time Darré lived in Ireland.)

The author owns a copy of Thomas Elrington's edition of Euclid, published in Dublin in 1802 for the use of students at Trinity College Dublin. It is written in Latin and has no numerical aspect whatsoever, as was the case for texts that served to emphasize logical argument, not mensuration. Darré steers a course that avoids this somewhat arid, albeit traditional, road to geometry. Nowhere does he espouse a philosophy or theory of teaching mathematics, but we feel that he might have approved of Clairault's method, on the basis of his choice of illustrative material.

Darré strikes an interesting contemporary note on p.5 of *Elements of Geometry*. He writes: *Mr Laplace, in his celebrated Mécanique Céleste (sic, Mécanique céleste) has introduced a new division of the circle into 400 degrees, the degree into 100 minutes, . . . , and so on.* Now, in 1795, following scientific recommendations, the French government decreed that the right angle would henceforward measure 100 degrees. There was a similar change to a metric system of measuring time. Laplace enthusiastically adopted this extended metric

system and made use of it in his *Traité de mécanique céleste*. Other French scientists were less enchanted by the new idea and it did not last long.

The first volumes of Laplace's treatise only appeared in 1799, several years after Darré left France, and we wonder how he became aware of this work, which was presumably difficult to obtain during the period of European-wide war. Possibly it could have been purchased during the truce of 1802-1803. The Russell Library at Maynooth houses several volumes of the *Mécanique céleste*, dating between 1799 and 1805, and it seemed reasonable to ask if any of these might possibly have been owned or used by Darré. We consulted the appropriate volumes in Maynooth in the course of writing this work. Two volumes had been donated by family of the mathematical physicist Arthur Conway, who worked at Maynooth and subsequently UCD, and these displayed his marginal notes, but there were no signs of earlier ownership or usage on anything we examined. We would like to thank the staff at the Russell Library for their assistance during our investigations.

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