

Doctor Peter Drelincourt 1644-1720

by Andrew Dawson

A memorial to Dr Peter Drelincourt 1644 - 1720. Dean of the Cathedral from 1691 to 1720 is situated in the north aisle of St Patrick's Church of Ireland Cathedral, Armagh. The memorial consists of a marble statue of the Dean by the Flemish sculptor John Michael Rysbrack and bears a Latin inscription which may be translated as follows:

Behold Reader
This statue of Peter Drelincourt Doctor of Laws
A scion of the Drelincourt family of Paris
Generous and erudite
Among whom his father Charles was outstanding
Because he caused the reformed faith to spread forth more widely
The ordinary people are indebted to him
Because they need not dread death
All Christians are indebted to him
Peter Drelincourt held his father as a model equally for learning and for morals
As a youth Peter Drelincourt left his fatherland
Being drawn to the Anglican Church
Not from the misfortune of his own Church
He regarded England
Not as refuge but as a homeland
Here his worth was recognised by James, Duke of Ormond
To whom he became a domestic chaplain
And to the Duke's grandson who was devoting himself to learning at Oxford
He became as much a counsellor as a tutor
He performed these duties so faithfully,
That he was appointed Dean of this church
Without vows and without canvassing
On his death his wife set up this monument
Out of deep piety
To him certainly this church not only fittingly furnished
But also built up
To him the church of Saint Dulac not only built up
But expensively supplied with sacred furniture
And with a rector reinstalled
To him a home for impoverished boys near Dublin
Supported with great generosity
Remain as enduring monuments
You Reader
Let your life be a monument
Whether or not a monument of stone is set up to you
By posterity

The Drelincourt family were French Huguenot Protestants. In the late 16th century the family was resident in Caen, where they were cordonniers (shoe-makers), ‘une famille de simple cordonniers’ (Haag) and it was in Caen that they became converts to the Protestant faith. In the late 1500s, on account of opposition to the Huguenots in Caen. Antoine Drelincourt moved to Sedan. Here in 1595 Antoine married Catherine Buyrette, the daughter of an eminent lawyer. The Buyrette’s were also Huguenots, indeed, Catherine’s brother Thomas and his brother-in-law Jean Molé had both perished in the St Bartholomew’s day massacre of 1572.

a physician and the other two married officials in the civil administration. Of the two sons, Jean followed the family tradition and became ‘un maître cordonnier’. The other son Charles I, born in 1592, became a Protestant clergyman and it is he who was the father of Dean Peter Drelincourt and is the Charles mentioned in the Armagh memorial.

Charles I married Marguerite Bolduc and they had fifteen children. He was rector of the Temple de Charenton, in Paris until his death in 1669. Charles I was renowned for his sermons and for his publications, of which the titles of more than fifty are known. Mostly they were

(Consolations for the faithful soul against the terrors of death) was particularly famous and may be obliquely referred to in the Armagh memorial.

The second son of Charles I and Marguerite, Charles II, became Physician to Louis XIV but fled to Holland just before the revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685 ‘Drelincourt n’attendit pas que la révocation de l’édit de Nantes le chassât de sa patrie’ (Haag). Charles II then became a Professor in the University of Leiden and Physician to William, Prince of Orange and Princess Mary.

The third daughter of Charles I, Émilie Charlotte, married a Huguenot, Daniel de Malnoë and both were imprisoned in the Bastille. After several months of detention they renounced the reformed religion and became Roman Catholics. On release Daniel Malnoë moved to Holland but Émilie remained in France where, on the orders of the King, she was allowed to sell property, which had been confiscated from her brothers and to keep the proceeds.

Peter Drelincourt 1644 -1720, commemorated by the monument in St Patrick’s Cathedral. was the sixth son of Charles I. The name Drelincourt, apart from the monument, is perpetuated in Armagh by Drelincourt Primary School, which is still in use. It was founded by the Dean’s widow, for the education of 20 boys and 20 girls, ‘In true religion and manual labour’ (Rogers). Also by a bequest of the Dean’s daughter, Lady Primrose, the City of Armagh was provided with a supply of piped water (Rogers). According to one of the French sources (Haag) there was another daughter, Charlotte Susanne, who married Jean Barbot in London in 1690. It appears that Jean Barbot renounced the Protestant faith and became a Roman Catholic. From this marriage one daughter was born. Charlotte Anne Barbot



Detail of the Drelincourt memorial showing the Latin inscription

Following the marriage of Antoine and Catherine the fortunes of the Drelincourt family dramatically improved.

Antoine and Catherine had three daughters and two sons. One daughter married

tracts favouring the Protestant religion. Two at least were publicly burned, one in Paris and another in Vitry, on the orders of the State authorities. The publication entitled “Les consolations de l’âme fidelle contre les frayeurs de la mort, 1654”

bishment of the cathedral: secondly, for all but rebuilding the Church of St Dulac and reinstalling a rector: thirdly, for founding a Home for impoverished boys near Dublin. It is recorded that Dean Drelincourt did fund extensive restoration work in St Patrick's Cathedral (Rogers), but no records could be uncovered in respect of the other two benefactions.

It seems likely that the *Ecclesia Scanti Dulaci* in the Latin inscription refers to the Church of Saint Doulagh, Malahide, Co. Dublin. This stands on a religious site of great antiquity. The nave of the present church was completed in 1864, though other parts of the building are medieval, the oldest part dating from the 12th century. There have been several episodes of demolition and rebuilding and it may be that Peter Drelincourt was associated with one of these.

St Doulagh's does have one recorded link with Armagh. In 1859 the Revd William Reeves came upon a document preserved in the Registry Office, Armagh headed, 'Litera Indulgentiae concessa Anachoritae de Seynt Doulagh' dated 1406. It was an open letter from Nicholas Fleming, Archbishop of Armagh, granting an Indulgence of forty days to any true Christian who would support Eustace Roche, the last known anchorite of St Doulagh's, either by assisting with the upkeep of his abode or by gifts of worldly goods. This letter also conferred authority on Eustace Roche to hear confessions and give absolution to repentant sinners.

If the *Ecclesia Scanti Dulaci* on the Drelincourt monument does indeed refer to Saint Doulagh's Church, Malahide, it is remarkable that the Revd Reeves did not mention Peter Drelincourt in the history of St Doulagh's which accompanies his publication of Archbishop Fleming's letter of 1406. William Reeves (1815-92) is commemorated by a brass plaque in the south aisle of Saint Patrick's Church of Ireland cathedral, Armagh. He was Vicar of Lusk, County Dublin in 1859, Keeper of Armagh Public Library

1862-86, and Dean of Armagh 1875-86; following this he was Bishop of Down, Connor and Dromore. It would appear that in 1859 he had either not seen the Drelincourt memorial, or had not read it, or had come to the conclusion that it did not refer to St Doulagh's. Malahide.

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The Drelincourt memorial in St. Patrick's Church of Ireland Cathedral, Armagh