



UNIVERSITY *of* LIMERICK

O L L S C O I L L U I M N I G H

The De Laval/ Willis Papers

P21

**University of Limerick
Library and Information Services**

University of Limerick Special Collections

The De Laval/ Willis Papers

Reference Code: IE 2135 P21

Title: The De Laval/ Willis Papers

Dates of Creation: Copies made c. 2000-2005 of items dating from 1689-1931

Level of Description: Fonds

Extent and Medium: 1 box (14 files)

CONTEXT

Name of Creator: The De Laval and Willis families of Limerick.

Biographical History: The de Lavals were a notable Huguenot family who claimed descent from King Henry IV of France and held title to extensive seigneuries in Picardy. Like other Huguenot families, they had greatly benefited from the Edict of Nantes issued by Henry IV in 1598, which granted substantial rights to Calvinist Protestants in a strongly Catholic country. The Edict was bitterly opposed by the Catholic clergy and many French parliaments, and was eventually revoked by Louis XIV in 1685. The revocation deprived French Protestants of all religious and civil liberties and subjected them to intense religious persecution. The Vicomte Henri Robert d'Uilly de Laval was imprisoned at Laon in 1688 and his estates were declared forfeit. He was able to escape in September 1689, and eventually sought refuge in Ireland. He moved to Portarlington in 1695, where his rank and considerable wealth allowed him to establish a leading position in the community.

In 1808, the Vicomte's great-granddaughter Deborah Charlotte Newcombe married Thomas Gilbert Willis, son of Thomas Willis, the Master of Portarlington's most famous French school. Thomas Gilbert, who had taken Holy Orders in the Anglican community, was appointed Rector of Kilmurry Church, Limerick (now adjacent to the campus of the University of Limerick); his son Thomas was appointed Curate to the same church in 1832. Thomas Gilbert was also appointed Prebendary to St Mary's Cathedral, and Master of the Diocesan School which he ran from his house in Thomas Street. He died in 1837 and was buried outside the west door of the Cathedral. Following his death, his widow opened a Day and Boarding School for Young Ladies in No. 5 Pery Square, while his son William continued to run the private school in Thomas Street. Thus, the strong tradition of education established by the Willis family in Portarlington was successfully extended to Limerick.

Archival History: Unknown.

Immediate Source of Acquisition: Donated by Mr and Mrs Carter of Marlborough, Wiltshire, on 21 May 2006. The donation was facilitated by Professor Geraldine Sheridan of the Languages and Cultural Studies Department at the University of Limerick.

CONTENT AND STRUCTURE

Scope and Content: The collection items consist of seals, reproductions of portraits and transcripts of written material relating to the De Laval and Willis families, providing in

snapshot detail the fate of a high-ranking Huguenot family forced into exile, their efforts to create a new life in a foreign country, and the lives of their descendants.

Appraisal, Destruction and Scheduling Information: All records have been retained.

Accruals: No accruals are expected.

System of Arrangement: The materials are divided into four series according to their form: Seals; Portraits and Photographs; Pedigrees; and Written Material.

CONDITIONS OF ACCESS AND USE

Conditions Governing Access: Unrestricted access to all items.

Conditions Governing Reproduction: Standard copyright regulations apply to all items. For photocopying or reproducing material, please consult with the staff.

Language/ Scripts of Material: English.

Physical characteristics: Mainly paper documents, mainly in good condition. **P21/14** requires a laptop or PC with a CD-drive and Microsoft Office Word or compatible software.

Finding Aids: A hard copy of the descriptive catalogue is available at the University of Limerick Special Collections.

ALLIED MATERIALS

Existence and Location of Copies: The originals of the materials in this collection are retained by the current representatives of the family in the UK.

Related Units of Description: Some items relating to the Sandville branch of the family, including a rental book of the Bellview estate kept by James Grene Barry, are held by the Limerick City Museum (<http://museum.limerick.ie/>). Papers of the Standish Barry family of Leamlara (incorporating estate maps, photographs and press cuttings relating to the sale of the property) are held by Cork County Library.

DESCRIPTION CONTROL

Archivist's Note: Papers arranged and described by Anna-Maria Hajba.

Rules or Conventions: This description follows guidelines based on *ISAD(G)* 2nd edition, 2000.

Date of Description: December 2008.

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The De Laval/ Willis Papers**A. SEALS**

- | | | | |
|---|---------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------|
| 1 | Undated | Five red wax seal impressions on cardboard, depicting the three facet seal of the Viscounts de Laval. <i>Fragile.</i> | 1 item |
| 2 | Undated | Silver seal impression on card, depicting the coat of arms of the Vicomte de Laval de Laon. <i>Fragile.</i> | 1 item |

B. PORTRAITS AND PHOTOGRAPHS

- | | | | |
|---|--------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------|
| 3 | Undated | Photograph of a musket presented to the Rev Thomas Gilbert Willis whilst at Trinity College, Dublin. | 1 p |
| 4 | Undated | Photograph of a miniature portrait of Deborah Willis (née Newcombe) (1778-1857). | 1 p |
| 5 | Undated | Photographs of miniature portraits of members of the Willis, Gubbins and Petrie families, including Thomas Willis (1748-1825), Thomas Willis (1809-1879), Newcombe Willis (1817-1905), Dorcas Gough Gubbins (1809-1879), Deborah Charlotte Willis (1841-1931), and Captain F. W. H. Petrie (1831-1900). | 2 pp |
| 6 | Undated
Original dated 1836 | Framed photograph of a silhouette of the Rev Thomas Gilbert Willis by Auguste Edouard, 1836. Reverse of frame bears the label of Ryman & Co., Ltd., Fine Art Dealers, 23 High Street, Oxford, and a typescript note of the provenance of the silhouette, with handwritten additions. | 1 item |

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- 7 2 January 2007 Letter from Josephine and Roy Carter to Professor Geraldine Sheridan, enclosing **P21/1-6**.
1 p

C. PEDIGREES

- 8 Undated Typescript computer-generated pedigree of the descendants of Robert Henri d'Ully Vicomte de Laval.
2 pp

D. WRITTEN MATERIAL

- 9 Undated Leather-bound notebook with a steel lock and key containing hand-copied transcripts of letters, wills and other documents by or relating to the de Laval family. The earliest transcribed item is a letter from Vicomte de Laval to his children dated 2 April 1689, written from a prison in France. Some transcripts are in French. Also included in the book are the Vicomte's coat of arms and a drawing of the family seat of Chateau de Goulencour near Laon in Picardy. Handwritten index. Pagination in pencil on written pages. For an index of the contents of this book, see **P21/10-11**. *Fragile*.
252 pp

- 10 Undated Handwritten index to the contents of **P21/9**.
2 pp

- 11 Undated Typescript copy of **P21/10**.
1 p

- 12 Undated Typescript English translation of a letter from
Original letter dated Vicomte de Laval to his children, written at Guise,
2 April 1689 2 April 1689. For the French transcript of this
letter, see **P21/9**.
4 pp

- 13 Undated Typescript transcripts of letters from Frances
Original letters dated Newcombe (granddaughter of the Vicomte de
May-September 1775 Laval) to her husband, Benjamin Newcombe,
Thomas Street, Dublin, written during a visit to
Calais. For the handwritten transcripts of these
letters, see **P21/9**.
4 pp

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2005-2006

CD-Rom entitled *de Laval Files*, containing Word document files of **P21/8**, **P21/11-13**, and a PDF-file of **P21/9**.

1 item