

### The 'Cockle Lord'

William Charles Fortescue succeeded to the Clermont estates on the death of his uncle, William Henry Fortescue, in 1806.

Dubbed the 'cockle lord' (because, like his uncle, he came to be reviled for levying a tax on the cockle gatherers at Blackrock and Lurgangreen), William Charles did little to improve his Clermont estates, being generally an absentee landlord for most of his tenure. Even up to his death, his land was only yielding ten shillings an acre, while the Foster estate, in Haggardstown, with only half the acreage yielded the same amount.

Neglecting his Clermont estate and tenants, he nevertheless, found ample time for other pursuits in England, and after one such foray, he was charged and fined fifty marks in March 1811 for "*a cruel and outrageous assault*"<sup>22</sup> on a woman named Sarah Lumley

It was, however, as a corpse that William Charles Fortescue passed into parish legend!

His relatives, at the time of his death aware of his great unpopularity, arranged a nocturnal funeral to avoid any demonstration of public contempt. On the 29th June 1829, at half past midnight on a bright moonlit night, his remains, as arranged, were taken from Ravensdale Park in a hearse drawn by six horses and proceeded to Dundalk. As the cortege entered the town, his coffin was pelted with stones and an attempt by an angry crowd to throw his remains off Castletown Bridge was desperately repulsed by his tenants. The funeral eventually made it to the Dublin road and then turned along Clermont Park wall (on the Marlbog road), arriving at Haynestown church at four o'clock in the morning.

Although the funeral was to have been private, there was a great crowd of 'commoners' present and a lot of derisory shouting ensued as the 'cockle lord' was laid to rest.

Not even forgiven in death, his grave was continually fouled and desecrated in the most unsavoury fashion for some time afterwards.