

# The End of the Line

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For almost 600 years the Fitzwilliam Family was among the foremost Catholic families in Ireland. Political ambition put an end to all that.

# The FITZWILLIAMS



Figure 1: Merrion Castle/ Archiseek.com

For more than five hundred years the Fitzwilliams had consolidated their position and reputation as one of the foremost catholic families in Ireland. Through many generations members of the clan had directly served reigning English Monarchs. They had held important Royal Household positions in both England and Ireland, commanded English Army Regiments, qualified as Lawyers in the London Kings Inn, married into prominent English Families and in Ireland they were honoured to hold the Highest Offices available to them. In Ireland down through the centuries they owned Castles in Wicklow, Swords, Dundrum, Simmonscourt, Baggotrath, Thorncastle and Merrion.

In the seventeenth Century their unswerving allegiance to the Monarchy and to their Catholic religion resulted in them having all their possessions confiscated on two separate occasions in less than fifty years. They were outlawed for similar reasons by both Oliver Cromwell and by William of Orange but in each case they were subsequently exonerated and had their lands and all assets restored. Through it all they remained loyal to the Crown and to their Catholic faith. This was notwithstanding that each of the early Viscounts had been refused a seat in the Irish House of Lords because of their refusal to take the oath of allegiance to the Monarch as Head of the Church.

A very good example was Thomas the Fourth Viscount Fitzwilliam. He was appointed a Privy Councillor and a commissioner of the Treasury by King James the second. After the Battle of the Boyne he was outlawed but later exonerated and had his assets returned intact. Despite being invited he was refused a seat in the House of Lords due to his religion<sup>1</sup>.

But all that was about to change and that change led to the end of the Fitzwilliam Dynasty in Ireland.

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<sup>1</sup> *A genealogical history of the dormant, forfeited and extinct Peerages* by Sir Bernard Burke London 1866.

## Richard 5th Viscount Fitzwilliam of Merrion

### (The one that broke the mould)

When Thomas the Fourth Viscount died in 1704 he was succeeded by his eldest son Richard who automatically became Richard 5<sup>th</sup> Viscount Fitzwilliam of Merrion. Richard was a very ambitious young man who found himself marginalised by history and particularly on account of his religion. He wanted dearly to be more politically involved. His family had always been exceptionally loyal to the Crown and this was recognised and accepted but it did not mean a seat in the House of Lords and therefore no say in how the Country was governed.



© The Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge. UK

Figure 2: Richard the 5th Viscount Fitzwilliam



© The Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge. UK

Figure3: Mary Shelley/Fitzwilliam

The primary Family residence, Merrion Castle, was in a dreadfully dilapidated state having been badly damaged by age and occupation by various regiments of soldiers, both friend and foe, during the past 50 years.

As he was about to get married to Miss Frances Shelley the eldest daughter of Sir John Shelley from Mitchelgrove in Sussex in 1705 he set about looking for a site for a new home. This he found in Mount Merrion on a hillside overlooking Dublin Bay, Blackrock and Howth Head on the north side of Dublin Bay<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> Francis Elrington Ball, *History of Dublin Vol2*, Dublin 1902-1920 PP21



Figure 2: View from Mount Merrion (William Ashford 1804, Fitzwilliam Museum)

In 1710 he took the major decision to relinquish his membership of the Catholic Church and join the Established Church of Ireland in order to take a seat in the Irish House of Lords, which he did on May 25<sup>th</sup> 1710.<sup>3</sup>

CONVERT ROLLS		105
Fitzwilliam, Rt Honble. Ld. Richard Merrion, cert. 22 June 1710, enrolled 25 June 1710 (A). Fitzwilliam, Richard, Lord Viscount, conformity 18 June 1710 (B). Enrolled 28 June 1710 (C).		

Figure 3: The Convert Rolls, edited by Eileen O'Byrne

He quickly became one of the most highly regarded members of the House<sup>4</sup>.

The selection of a Hanoverian Prince to be King of England was to have very lasting effect on the Monarchy in Britain and indeed on the role of the Fitzwilliams in Ireland. On the death of Queen Anne in England the Throne was inherited by the closest Protestant relative. She had more than 50 closer Blood relatives but since the Act of Settlement was passed in 1701 no catholic could inherit the Throne. George's protestant mother Sophie was a granddaughter of King James 1<sup>st</sup> of England and so he was selected to be crowned King of England.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Lords Journal.

<sup>4</sup> D 'Alton's History of the County Dublin p 701.

<sup>5</sup> Britsroyal.com 2012



Figure 4: King George 1st of England/Royal Portraits

In Dublin Richard chaired a committee set up in 1715 to congratulate King George the First on his accession to the English Throne<sup>6</sup>. Later that year King George appointed him an Irish Privy Councillor<sup>7</sup>, possibly thanks to a glowing reference from his friend Archbishop of Dublin William King, a frequent guest in Mount Merrion.

Richard's relationship with the King and with his son George the Prince of Wales developed over the years as his children were born and grew up in Mount Merrion. As time went on his family became great favourites at court in London.

Dublin was becoming very claustrophobic for Richard and he happily accepted an invitation from the Prince of Wales to represent him as a Westminster Member of Parliament for the Rotten Borough of Fowey in the Duchy of Cornwall in 1727<sup>8</sup>. Fowey was a feudal tenure of the Prince of Wales where voting was confined to tenants who paid "Scot and Lot" (taxation), they numbered about 300. He quietly served the people of Fowey for seven years. He is reported to have delivered just one "studied but laboured" speech in the House<sup>9</sup>.

Richard and Frances had five children - Mary (1707), Frances (1709), Richard (1711), William (1712), and John (1714). It is interesting to note that the male children were baptised in Established Churches whilst their daughters were baptised as Catholics. This is presumably was at the request of Lady Frances who was a devout Catholic.

### **The Daughters of Richard and Frances**

Mary, the eldest daughter was 20 when the Family moved to Thorpe in Surrey, England. She immediately became a Maid of Honour to Caroline the Princess of Wales and very shortly afterwards to Caroline as Queen<sup>10</sup>. It is reported that she had many suitors before she

<sup>6</sup> John Lodge IRISH PEERAGE Volume IV pp319/320

<sup>7</sup> Mant's History of the Church of Ireland vol. ii, pp 271;277;

<sup>8</sup> Francis Nichols / *The British Compendium*, London 1735

<sup>9</sup> ILCHESTER Lord Hervey and his friends 44.

<sup>10</sup> Arthur Collins and Sir Egerton Brydges. *Collins Peerage of England Vol 3*, London 1812



married 40 year old Henry Herbert the 9<sup>th</sup> Earl of Pembroke and 6<sup>th</sup> Earl Montgomery in 1732. This marriage eventually proved to be the most important event in the history of the Fitzwilliam family.



Figures 5 & 5a: Henry Herbert, 9th. Earl of Pembroke, and Mary Fitzwilliam/Herbert. (Both by Wm. Hoare)

Henry was known as the Architect Earl. He designed and oversaw the building of Herbert House in Whitehall in the City and he made many alterations to the family seat in Wilton in Wiltshire. After Henry's death in 1749 Mary married a 67 year old commoner Major North Ludlow Bernard<sup>11</sup>, much to the amusement of the chattering classes who obviously did not approve. Mary died in 1769 and is buried with the Herbert family in Wilton.

Richard and Frances' second daughter Frances also married in 1732. Her husband was George Evans the Second Baron Carbery. George was MP for the constituency of Westbury from 1734 until 1747. He inherited the Laxton Estates in Nottinghamshire which generated an income of £1100 PA and he also received £1400 each year from his County Limerick Irish Estates. Yet in 1743 and in subsequent years he is reported to be in severe financial difficulties<sup>12</sup>.

He later took his seat in the Irish House of Lords and died in 1759. They had three children and Frances lived until 1789.

### **Lady Frances Fitzwilliam**

After her daughters got married in 1732 Richard's wife Frances decided that since their marriage was not working and as a staunch Catholic she could not, or would not, countenance divorce she took herself off to a convent on the continent. There she remained until Richard died in 1743. She then returned to England and lived to the ripe old age of 86. She died in 1771 and is buried in St James' in Piccadilly London.

<sup>11</sup> Lewis Saul Benjamin, *Lady Suffolk and her Circle*, London 1924 PP47

<sup>12</sup> The History of Parliament Trust 1964-2014

## **The Sons of Richard and Frances**

Their second son William was born in Mount Merrion and Baptised in St Peter's Church in Aungier St on July 11<sup>th</sup> 1712. In 1747 William returned to Dublin to take up an appointment of Usher of the Black Rod in Ireland<sup>13</sup>. His brother Richard also requested him to assist the appointed agent Bryan Fagan in managing the family's affairs and properties. It would appear from copious correspondence between the brothers that he was not enamoured with Dublin but due to his lack of means he had no option but to stay. He and his wife had one child who died during their time in Dublin<sup>14</sup>.

The youngest son John was also born in Dublin and was baptised in St Peter's Church on March 28<sup>th</sup> 1714<sup>15</sup>. He followed a path taken by many junior members of the clan over the ages. The eldest son was always going to inherit the land and the properties so the other male descendants had to undertake different professions or occupations. Most became soldiers although some became lawyers, priests, farmers and "Gentlemen". At a very young age John was appointed a Page of Honour to his Highness the Prince of Wales<sup>16</sup> and one of the Equerries to Prince William (3<sup>rd</sup> son of King George 2<sup>nd</sup>)<sup>17</sup>. In 1731 he was appointed a coronet in the Horse Guards and later a Groom of Bedchamber of His Royal Highness Prince William the Duke of Cumberland. He also served on his staff at the battle of Val in 1747. In Oct 1751 he married Barbara the daughter of the Bishop of Durham.

John Fitzwilliam was elected Member of Parliament for the constituency of New Windsor in 1754, really to protect Cumberland's interests. Like his father he is reported to have spoken only once in Parliament in fourteen years<sup>18</sup>. He retired from the Army with the rank of Lieutenant General of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Foot<sup>19</sup>. John died in Windsor in 1789.

## **Richard 6<sup>th</sup> Viscount Fitzwilliam of Merrion**

**(Soldier, Landscaper and Property Developer)**

The eldest son of Richard and Frances and heir to the title was also called Richard. He was born in Dublin in 1711 and was the first Fitzwilliam to be baptised in a Protestant Church, St Andrews in Suffolk St. Dublin.

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<sup>13</sup> John Lodge. Peerage of Ireland Vol. 4.

<sup>14</sup> Pembroke Papers in the National Archives of Ireland.

<sup>15</sup> St Peter's COI Church Parish records.

<sup>16</sup> Edward Kimber and John Almon, / *Peerage of Ireland Vol 2. London 1768*

<sup>17</sup> Cracroft's Peerage (2012)

<sup>18</sup> Walpole memoirs. Geo II P347.

<sup>19</sup> Richard Cannon; Historical record of the second regiment of the foot(1839)pp92/93

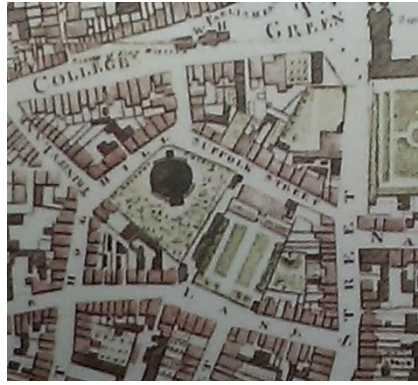


Figure 7: St Andrews church from 1776 (Roe Map of Dublin)

He spent his early years in Mount Merrion and there are references to him spending at least some of his teenage years at the University of Lorraine in Nancy France. He moved with his family to their new home in Thorpe in Surrey in 1727.

Following the marriage of his sister Mary to Henry the Earl of Pembroke Richard was appointed coronet in the Royal Regiment of Horse Guards commanded by his brother in Law the Earl of Pembroke<sup>20</sup>. In 1743 King George 2<sup>nd</sup> had sent an English force, including the Horse Guards led by the Earl of Pembroke, to join with his Hanoverian cousins in a successful battle with the French in Dettingen, Germany. It was during this expedition that his father Richard 5<sup>th</sup> Viscount died in Surrey.

In May 1744 Richard was elected Knight Companion of the Order of Bath, a very distinguished honour which was bestowed on a small number of Military Leaders by the reigning Monarch. Two years later in April 1746 the King appointed him Vice Admiral of the Province of Leinster. Later that year he was appointed a Fellow of the Royal Society, a Society, founded in 1660, dedicated to the promotion of science. In 1751 he took his seat in the Irish House of Lords, a seat once held by his father until his emigration to England. In 1766 The King appointed him a Privy Councillor in Ireland.

In the meantime, May 1744, Richard the 6<sup>th</sup> Viscount married Catherine Decker the eldest Daughter and heiress of Sir Matthew Decker from Richmond in Surrey.

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<sup>20</sup> Edward Kimber & John Almon, *Peerage of Ireland* London 1768 PP40.





Figure 8: Catherine Decker (Fitzwilliam Museum)



Figure 9: Richard 6<sup>th</sup> Viscount (Fitzwilliam Museum)

Decker was a very successful, wealthy and entrepreneurial Dutch born businessman who



© The Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge. UK

Figure 6: The Richmond Home of Matthew Decker and later the Fitzwilliam family (William Ashford 1804)

owned a thriving import and export business trading with the Far East and a director of the East Indies Company. He was a renowned collector of European Fine Art with a particular fondness for Dutch masters of which he had a vast collection. On a visit to Decker's home for dinner in 1716 King George 1st was famously presented with a very rare home grown pineapple for desert. Later, in 1720, Decker commissioned Theodorus Netscher to paint a pineapple grown in his greenhouses in Richmond.



Figure 7: The Decker Pineapple (Fitzwilliam Museum).

Richard was contacted in 1745 by Thomas Fitzgerald the Earl of Kildare requesting him to lease some Fitzwilliam owned land east of St Stephen's Green. Kildare wished to build a beautiful city dwelling on the site. Fitzwilliam's agent Bryan Fagan queried why he would build on that soft south city site when all the Gentry, Professional Classes and Politicians were living north of the River Liffey. Kildare is reputed to have responded "Where I go the others will follow" or words to that effect. Richard Cassel was commissioned to design and oversee the building of the magnificent Kildare House, later to be called Leinster House, the building of which was completed in 1748<sup>21</sup>.



*Figure 8: Kildare/Leinster House in 1911.*

The building of Kildare House was a huge success, had the desired effect and interest in the area grew. Fitzwilliam himself

retained John Ensor, Richard Cassel's assistant architect, to design the outline of Merrion Square and the streets immediately adjoining it. Ensor later designed a number of the houses built on the site. Since the whole area was so low lying the land nearer the river had to be drained before building could commence.

Fitzwilliam, his Architect John Ensor and Agent Bryan Fagan drew up very comprehensive plans for the new development. There would be a sense of uniformity in the style of houses. Each would be 3.5 stories over basement. The sash windows were to be the same size as were the doors. The Bricks used in the frontage were produced in the Fitzwilliam owned brickworks in Merrion. The Granite to be used in the Pillars, Window surrounds and sills, Door frames and steps was all to be procured from the Fitzwilliam owned Granite quarries in Ticknock. All the buildings were to be used for residential purposes. No Shops or Alehouses were allowed. Sites were sold in lots to facilitate the building of two or three houses<sup>22</sup>.

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<sup>21</sup> Irish Architectural Website ARCHITECT 2009.

<sup>22</sup> Francis Elrington Ball. The History of the County of Dublin Vol. II

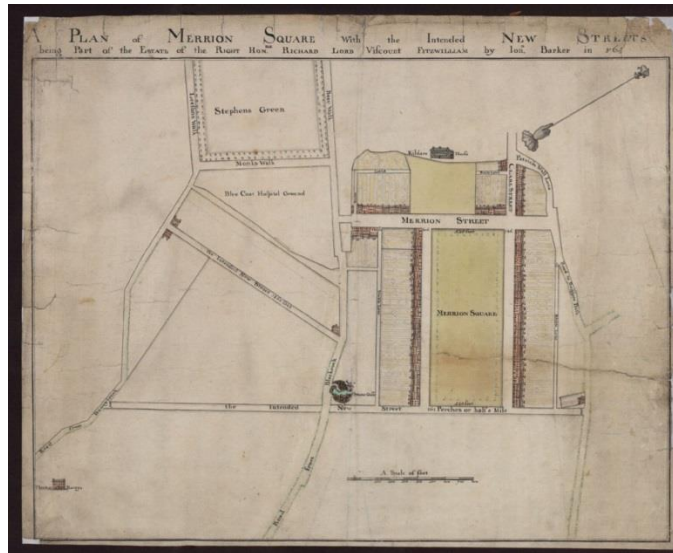


Figure 9: Jonathan Barker Map of Merrion Sq. 1764 (National Archives of Ireland/Pembroke Papers)

Once the design was agreed and he was ready to proceed they cleared and laid out the complete area. The Park was the first to be designed and it was surrounded with two rows of trees and planted with some exotic shrubs.

The first leases were sold and building commenced in 1762. It would appear that Fitzwilliam had agreed with Fitzgerald not to build any houses directly opposite the lawns of Kildare House. Soon after building commenced Lord Louth contacted Fitzwilliam through his Agent requesting that he sell a site on the West side of the Square fronting Kildare House. He offered to pay £6000 for the site, a huge sum. Fitzwilliam told his Agent to thank Lord Louth for his generous offer but regretted that the site was not for sale<sup>23</sup>.

In fact that site remained vacant until 1790 when his successor acceded to a request to build a fountain in memory of Charles Manners the 4<sup>th</sup> Duke of Rutland who had been Lord Lieutenant of Ireland from 1784 until his untimely death in 1787. The Fountain, completed in 1792, was both decorative and useful in that the water used in the fountain was fresh and clean and was greatly in demand by local residents who did not have such a luxury in their homes.

<sup>23</sup> Pembroke papers in National Archives

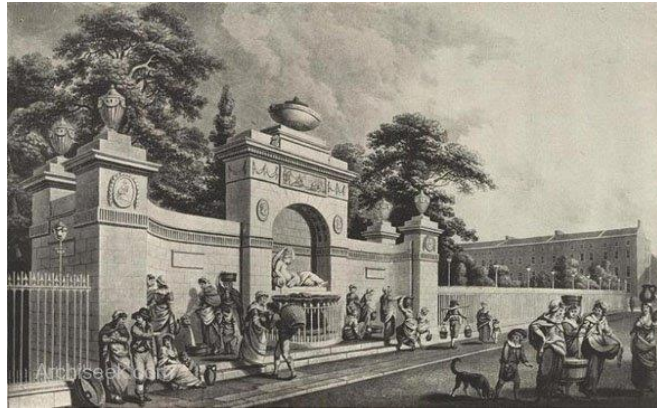


Figure 10: Rutland Fountain in Merrion Sq. (Francis Sandys---Archiseek)

The Merrion Square project was not without its difficulties but The Fitzwilliam Agent Bryan Fagan, who died suddenly in 1761, and his successor his wife Elizabeth proved to be very determined and astute manager and oversaw a very successful completion of the project. Although building in the area which included Denzil St, Clare St and Holles St (all called after Denzil Holles the Earl of Clare, a distant cousin of Fitzwilliam) continued into the early nineteenth century. The era of Classicism and Grandeur really ended with the passing of the Act of Union in 1801.

Viscount Fitzwilliam in the meantime, in order to optimise the value of his extensive holdings in Blackrock and Booterstown built two very beautiful and important Avenues namely Mount Merrion Avenue and Blackrock Avenue which is now called Cross Avenue, on his estates. Mount Merrion Avenue was designed to give access to the Sea at Blackrock for residents of the Lodge at Mount Merrion. It was exactly a mile in length and was lined by a double row of trees. Likewise the construction of Cross Avenue which connected Blackrock with Booterstown made available numerous very valuable sites for development. These two Avenues were completed in the late 1750s and appear in the Jonathan Barker 1762 map of the area.

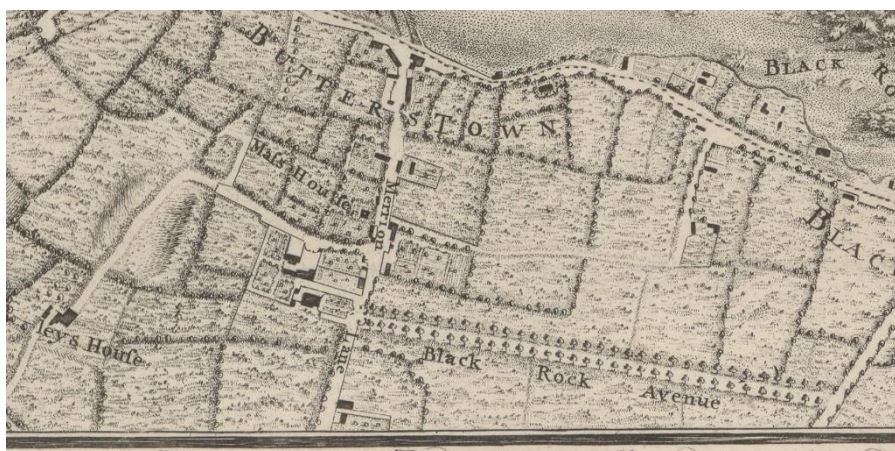


Figure 11: Rocque Map 1757 --Blackrock.



During this period Richard 6<sup>th</sup> Viscount spent an increasing amount of his time in Ireland. In Mount Merrion he added a wing to the main house. It was reported to be an unattractive addition that did no justice to the craftsmen employed. It was in the adjoining Park that he executed the greatest changes. He built a summer, or Shell house, and radiating from that a series of walkways or avenues surrounded by newly planted Irish Hardwood trees. The Newly re-constructed Avenue from the House to Mount Anville and the refurbished North Avenue were much admired. Bishop Pococke on his 1752 tour of Ireland stayed as a guest and wrote “We came to Mirian (Mount Merrion) the seat of Lord Fitzwilliam, a most glorious situation commanding a fine view which appears very beautiful from the top of the hill through the vistas cut in the grove of fir trees”

Richard continued to live mostly in Ireland until his death in 1776 in Mount Merrion. He is buried in Donnybrook graveyard. His Widow Catherine outlived him by ten years and is buried in Richmond Surrey.

## Mount Merrion House



Figure 12. Merrion House by Wm. Ashford. (Fitzwilliam Museum)

Shortly after Richard 5<sup>th</sup> Viscount and his family moved to Surrey in England in 1726 it was decided that the new house in Mount Merrion should be rented out. The North wing of the proposed Manor house together with the beautifully stone cut stables on the South side of the Lawns and the formal gardens were built in 1711. Presumably the intention was to complete the construction of the Manor House as time went on.

The “Lodge” as it was then called was spacious in its own right and commanded a magnificent view of Dublin Bay and the Dublin Mountains. Initially the Demesne comprised of one hundred acres but this was later increased to three hundred acres enclosed by an eight foot high stone built wall which was capped in locally quarried granite. It is a credit to the stonemasons that built it that much of that wall remains three hundred years later.

The first tenant was a young Judge from England called John Wainright who resided there until his untimely death from pneumonia in 1741.<sup>24</sup> He was followed by Lord Chancellor Robert Jocelyn. Jocelyn was an extremely social man with a large circle of influential friends.

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<sup>24</sup> Francis Elrington Ball *History of Dublin County Vol 2*. Dublin 1902-1920



Among the regular visitors to the Lodge were Samuel Madden and John Prior the founders of the Dublin Society, John Lodge the author of a series of Peerage Books, various Bishops and Senior Officers of State including The Lord Lieutenant, the Chief Baron of the Exchequer, future Lord Chancellor Hardwick, Lord Harrington and other members of the House of Lords. Viscount Jocelyn died there in 1756.

Among the other notable people who lived here for various periods was John Fitzgibbon, Lord Clare who became the first Irish born Lord Chancellor of Ireland. In 1789 whilst resident in Mount Merrion he laid on a very lavish Birthday party for the Prince Regent who would later become King George 4<sup>th</sup>. Lord Clare commissioned what was then the most expensive Coach ever seen in these islands. It can still be seen in the National Museum of Ireland.

## **Richard 7<sup>th</sup> Viscount Fitzwilliam of Merrion**

**(Collector and Patron of the Arts)**



During the six centuries that the Fitzwilliam family spent in Ireland their menfolk served all the Kings and Queens of England with unflinching loyalty, notwithstanding their adherence to their Catholic religion. The menfolk served in the Royal households, as soldiers, lawyers, judges, sheriffs and treasurers. It really took until the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century for an heir to the title to break the traditional mould and break it he did.

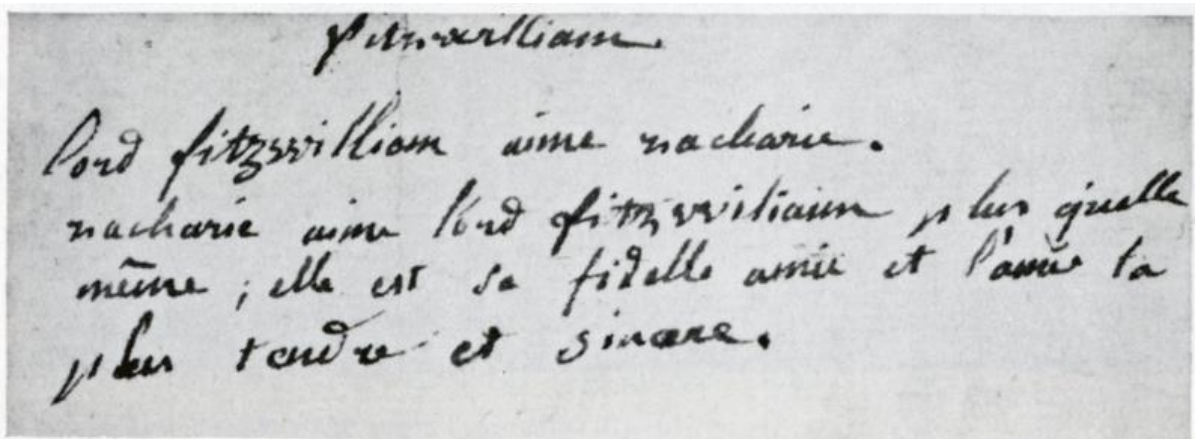
Richard the 7<sup>th</sup> Viscount Fitzwilliam of Merrion was the eldest son of Richard the 6<sup>th</sup> Viscount and his wife Catherine the daughter and heiress of Sir Matthew Decker, a wealthy Dutch Merchant who lived in Richmond in Surrey. Richard was born in Richmond on August 1<sup>st</sup> 1745 and continued to regard it as his principal residence throughout his life.

He attended the Charterhouse School in Godalming, Surrey from which he graduated with high distinction. He studied Art, Languages and Music in Trinity College in Cambridge and graduated with a Master's Degree in 1764.

A popular rumour circulated at the time that Richard had fallen in love with a barmaid in a local tavern and that his father intervened and sent him on a prolonged tour of European Capitals. By the time he returned two years later the Barmaid was married living in a fine house with a husband and little child.

His first port of call was Paris where he went to study music with Jacques Duphy<sup>25</sup>. There he not only honed his skills on the keyboard and composition but he also began collecting Sheet music. Although he never married, Richard began a long term affair with a beautiful Parisian based Ballet dancer called Anne Bernard better known by her Stage name Mademoiselle Zacharie<sup>26</sup>. They were obviously very much in love as the affair lasted for more than ten years and together they parented three children. Richard was a frequent visitor to Paris right up to the French Revolution in 1789. Attached is an inscription found in Richard's personal papers after his death.

**Autographed inscription on his 1784 copy of *le spectacles de paris*.**



**English translation.** Lord Fitzwilliam loves Zacharie. Zacharie loves Lord Fitzwilliam more than herself; she is a faithful friend, the most tender and sincere friend.

After Paris, Richard travelled to Italy, Netherlands and Spain where he procured rare and valuable musical manuscripts of compositions by the notable Italian born Harpsichordist Domenico Scarlatti, who was musician to the Spanish Court and composed the music for numerous Spanish Folk songs.<sup>27</sup> Back in London he persuaded JC Bach to supply him with an original copy of his Opus 5 Sonatas. He also acquired "The Fitzwilliam Virginal Book" (sometimes incorrectly called Queen Elizabeth's Virginal Book<sup>28</sup>) a unique compilation of sixteenth century keyboard music supposedly transcribed by Francis Tregian, a recusant

<sup>25</sup> Duncan Robinson. Dir. Cambridge Museum; *History Today* Vol54, no.7 July 2004

<sup>26</sup> Fitzwilliam Museum publication

<sup>27</sup> Duncan Robinson

<sup>28</sup> Bernard Katz. *Canadian University Music review* Vol 14. January 1 1994

who died in Fleet Prison in 1608. Richard's music collection was described as being the "most extensive and valuable in the Kingdom, the Royal Collection alone excepted"

In his library he had a collection of 10,000 Volumes and antiquarian books. It is indeed probable that he acquired his love of Art from his Grandfather, Sir Matthew Decker, who had spent a lifetime collecting works by Old Dutch and other European Artists. Among the works inherited by Richard were a collection of priceless Dutch Masters paintings together with Titan's 'Venus, Cupids and the Lute Player', Veronese's 'Hermes, Herse and Aglauros' and more than 40,000 prints mounted carefully in bound folios<sup>29</sup>.

Whilst very conscious of his Irish roots and significant holdings he rarely visited Dublin in his early years. He was however very interested in the developments made by his father Richard the 6<sup>th</sup> Viscount both in the City and on the Demesne and he was in constant communication with both his illustrious tenants in Mount Merrion and with his joint Agents Barbara and Richard Verschoyle.

His principal residence was in the house owned by his parents and grandparents in Richmond in Surrey. But as he grew older his interest in the family's Irish Estates developed.

In 1804 when he commissioned William Ashford to produce a number of paintings and drawings of his home in Mount Merrion he also requested him to travel to England to make a number of drawings of his Richmond home.

#### **Fitzwilliam Richmond home**



*Figure 12. Richmond by Wm. Ashford/Fitzwilliam Museum.*

It was at that time that he (initially anonymously) wrote in French the "Lettres d'Atticus" (Protestantism and Catholicism considered in their comparative influence on society) which when published caused quite a stir and were later translated into English and published under his own name<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Duncan Robinson

<sup>30</sup> Google Books



LETTRES D'ATTICUS OU CONSIDÉRATIONS  
SUR LA RELIGION CATHOLIQUE ET LE  
PROTESTANTISME: PAR UN ANGLAIS  
PROTESTANT...

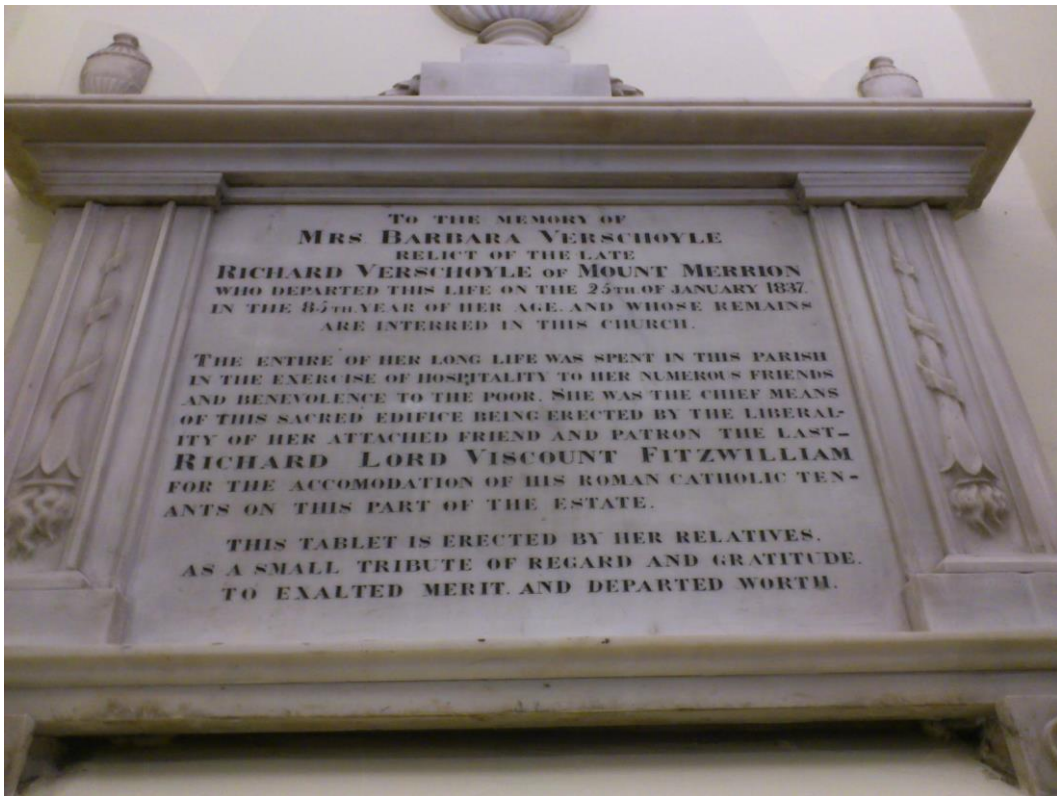
RICHARD FITZ-WILLIAM

Following the death of his Father Richard the 6<sup>th</sup> Viscount in 1776 Richard was elected to the Irish House of Lords. In 1781 he proposed an Act of Parliament to enclose the Gardens in Merrion Square a development that helped change the face of residential Dublin. In 1789 he was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society. That year he designed and submitted plans for the development of Fitzwilliam Square. Work on that project commenced in 1792. Obviously it was hoped by both the Viscount himself and his Agents and advisors that the Fitzwilliam Square project would be as successful and as remunerative as the Merrion Square and environs was for his father thirty years earlier. The project was beset with many problems mainly concerned with Developer's cash-flow problems. The slow progress was further exacerbated by the Act of Union which was introduced in 1801 and resulted in an exodus of wealthy residents from Dublin. It was mainly due to hard work by his Agents that the construction of Fitzwilliam Street and Fitzwilliam Square was eventually completed.

During his many visits to Ireland he met regularly with Joint Agents Richard and Barbara Verschoyle and at Barbara's request he financed the building of the Catholic Church on Booterstown Avenue which was dedicated on August 15<sup>th</sup> 1813<sup>31</sup>.

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<sup>31</sup> Brendan Grimes. *The Architecture of Dublin's Neo-Classical Roman Catholic Temples Vol 1* .NCAD 2005



**Plaque in Booterstown Catholic Church.**

In 1790 at the request of his cousin the Earl of Pembroke he became MP for Wilton and served the constituency "without distinction" for 16 years before passing it to a member of the Herbert family<sup>32</sup>.

In total, William Ashford, eminent Landscape Artist, the founder and first President of the Royal Hibernian Academy produced 6 large paintings of and from Mount Merrion Demesne. He also completed a folio of 26 Grey Wash Drawings of Mount Merrion and Richmond. These are now on display in the Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge.

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<sup>32</sup> Pembroke Papers 408/422/428





**View of Dublin Bay from Mount Merrion by Wm. Ashford in 1804**

Richard had two younger brothers, neither of whom were in good health and had no issue so it was his responsibility to ensure that the Irish Estates remained intact.

**The Herbert/Pembroke connection.**

The most widely reported story has it that he invited a very distant relative, the 5<sup>th</sup> Earl Fitzwilliam from Wentworth, Yorkshire and his First Cousin's son George Augustus the 11<sup>th</sup> Earl of Pembroke to tea in his house in Richmond in order to determine which family would inherit the Fitzwilliam Irish Estates.



The young Earl Fitzwilliam from Yorkshire failed to impress the Viscount by drinking the hot tea from his saucer rather than out of the cup. So it came to pass that the vast Dublin based Irish Estates of the Fitzwilliam's of Merrion were bequeathed to his cousins the Herbert family, the Earls of Pembroke from Wilton. In fact the Cup and Saucer used on that occasion are still on exhibition in Wilton the Stately home of the Pembroke's in Wiltshire. It helped that Richard's Aunt Mary had married Henry the 9<sup>th</sup> Earl of Pembroke in 1732. In his Will, it is noted that he made significant settlements on Anne Bernard and their three sons in Paris.

Worried that his very significant collection of Musical Scores, Manuscripts, Books, Prints, Paintings etc. would be broken up and housed in different museums he bequeathed all his

treasured collections and one hundred thousand pounds worth of South Sea Annuities<sup>33</sup> to his Alma Mater Cambridge University in order for them to build a museum that would house his and as many other collections as they could. The Museum eventually opened its doors to the public in 1848<sup>34</sup>.

### The Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge



Richard the Seventh Viscount Fitzwilliam died in his Town house in Bond Street London on February 4<sup>th</sup> 1816. The Viscount Fitzwilliam of Merrion title passed to his brother John who died in 1830 and lastly to his brother Thomas who died in 1833.

So, after 600 years the Fitzwilliam link with Ireland was broken only to be replaced by the Herbert/ Pembroke era.

### Richard 7th Viscount Fitzwilliam in 1815, the end of the line



© The Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge . UK

<sup>33</sup> BH Blacker. *Fitzwilliam Richard 7<sup>th</sup> Viscount Fitzwilliam (1745-1816)*

<sup>34</sup> *Gent Magazine* (1816) 1.189