



Public Record Office  
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# **INTRODUCTION**

# **FORTESCUE PAPERS**

November 2007

# Fortescue Papers (D4074)

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## Summary

The 600-plus documents which comprise the records of the Fortescue family of Dromiskin, Co. Louth, represent a rich resource not only for the student of local history, but for those concerned with the study of Irish landholding during the turbulent Williamite period.



## **Background**

The lands of Dromiskin were the property of the See of Armagh. In 1622 Sir Faithful Fortescue of Carrickfergus (a nephew of Sir Arthur Chichester) bought the lease of the lands from Sir Moses Hill. Upon Sir Faithful's death, Dromiskin passed to his eldest son, Sir Thomas Fortescue who consolidated the family's Co. Louth estate by purchasing several freeholds within the area, including Baltray and lands along the River Glyde.



## The Papers

By his will of 1684, Sir Thomas Fortescue settled the lease of Dromiskin on his eldest son, Chichester, and the freeholds on the younger son, William. Chichester, however, died during the Siege of Derry leaving an infant son, Thomas, as his sole heir. Perhaps because of this, William, who had been living at Dromiskin, attempted to stake a claim to the lease himself, thus hoping to gain all of the family's Co. Louth estate. A legal wrangle then ensued between William and the guardians of young Thomas, a matter further complicated by the fact that old Sir Thomas (who lived until 1710) sided with each party at various stages of the proceedings. The intricacies of this tussle, which witnessed claims and counter-claims, various recriminations and gradually descended into a general slanging match, are documented in detail [D4074/1/1/1-10].

Though the case was finally settled c.1715 (with the lease of Dromiskin coming into possession of Thomas), the family as a whole had by this stage become involved in another legal dispute with the Archbishop of Armagh, who accused Sir Thomas and William Fortescue of surreptitiously annexing church estates during the upheaval of the 1690s. Document D4074/1/7, in which the Archbishop sets his lengthy grievances before the Lord Chancellor of Ireland, Sir Constantine Phipps, paints a vivid picture of local disorder within a kingdom in crisis.

The descendants of Thomas Fortescue continued to hold Dromiskin during the eighteenth century, whilst those of his uncle, William, held and/or acquired various estates in Louth and elsewhere. Sections D4074/2-7 chart the rise in prosperity, of William's family, from his death in 1733, through 1777, the year when his grandson, William Henry Fortescue was created Earl of Clermont, to the year 1833, when the large Clermont estates (at Reynoldstown and Ravensdale, Co. Louth and Grangegeeth, Co. Meath) reverted to Thomas Fortescue of Dromiskin. Detailed maps (many coloured) are also included, along with a series of rentals.



*Richard Talbot,  
1<sup>st</sup> Duke of Tyrconnel*

Sections D4074/8-10 of the archive contain deeds, leases, maps, rentals, etc, relating to other lands were acquired from or by the Fortescues, including five townlands near Banbridge sold by Chichester Fortescue of Dromiskin to the 3rd Marquis of Downshire in 1826. Of particular interest, however, are papers concerning the Levinge family of Knockdrin Castle, Mullingar, Co. Westmeath, whose lands at Stickillin, Co. Louth, were sold to Thomas Fortescue in 1835. The story of Stickillin represents an interesting example of the machinations of Williamite favourites (in this instance Henry Sidney, Earl of Romney, Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, 1692-1695) in relation to the post 1691 forfeitures. The land itself was originally part of the estate of Richard Talbot, 1st Duke of Tyrconnel, James II's Lord Lieutenant.

After the confiscation of Tyrconnel's land by William III, Stickillin was granted to Henry Sidney, who in turn sold it to Charles Campbell of Dublin. In the wake of the English Act of Resumption of 1700, which sought to undermine the Williamite policy

of rewarding favourites with large tracts of Irish land, Stickillin was sold by the Trustees of the Forfeited Estates to Sir Richard Levinge. For those researching the land settlement in the wake of the Jacobite defeat in Ireland, Stickillin makes a worthy case study.

