

A Grave Robbery in Inniscarra

by Anne Donaldson

Young men of high spirits, having probably imbued some spirits as well, decided to commune with the spirits in Inniscarra Graveyard for the lark.

Many young men of the 10th Hussars, then stationed at Ballincollog, on a lovely June day in 1895 decided to have one last swim at Inniscarra Graveyard. They were due to leave later that day for Newbridge barracks. Full of high spirits and peer pressure a group of young men entered the vault of Sir George Colthurst. There, according to the reports of the Blarney Court of June 7th, they were charged with desecration of the Colthurst vault, and unlawfully and there indecently did disinter and remove the body of Mrs Peggy Colthurst and take and carry away a gold ring.

A Miss Harriet Currey discovered the damage next day. She told the courts that Sir George's lead coffin

had been halved and his legs were hanging out. A corpse was put standing in a corner. This was the corpse of Peggy Colthurst who had died in 1865 aged 87 years. Some soldiers gave evidence that that unnamed soldiers were walking about the graveyard ... dressed and undressed....and one soldier was carrying a skull on a stick while leading a marching group.

Four young soldiers were initially charged. Henry William Flack had his charge withdrawn as he gave evidence. Henry was born in Huntingdon in 1876. The three prisoners: Arthur Grice; Frederick George Beake, born 1876 in Kent; and Herbert Griffiths, born 1877 in Middlesex. History doesn't report what sentences these three teenagers received. But as all three finished up as Chelsea Pensioners in their old age, one can only imagine the reminiscing they had on their 'mad days' in Cork.

Sources: The London Guardian, June 1st 1895: The London Times, June 8th 1895.