

## **The brutal murder of Lord Frederick Cavendish**

Phoenix Park murders is the name given to the assassination on May 6, 1882, of Lord Frederick Cavendish, British secretary for Ireland, and Thomas Henry Burke, his undersecretary, in Phoenix Park, Dublin. They were stabbed to death by members of the “Invincibles,” a terrorist splinter group of the [Fenian movement](#). Two of those arrested turned state’s evidence, five were hanged, and three were sentenced to penal servitude. Charles Stewart [Parnell](#) was alleged (1887) by his political enemies to have been personally involved in the plot. A parliamentary commission appointed to investigate the charges exonerated him (1890).

The political agitators’s interest was apparently in killing Cavendish’s companion Thomas Henry Burke. Though Burke’s assassination was planned in advance, Cavendish had arrived the same day in Ireland and was killed as a byproduct of sectarian political violence. Popular myth has it that he was stabbed to death by a group of assailants. While there were a group of men present and partaking, their method was more sinister. Instead of stabbing their intended victims the group brought surgical knives and slashed the victims many times to promote a slower suffering and eventual death by bleeding.

Lord Frederick was a son of the Duke of Devonshire (Sir William 1808-91 – 7<sup>th</sup> Duke of Devonshire from 1858) who lived at Holker Hall, near Cartmel. During William’s era, Holker Hall became an important social location. William developed local resources (eg involved in the development of Barrow in Furness) and was involved in politics.

Frederick (1836-82) was William’s second son and entered Parliament as a Liberal in 1865. His wife was the niece of Mrs Gladstone and Cavendish became Gladstone’s private secretary. In 1882, when W.E. [Forster](#) resigned, Cavendish was sent to Ireland as chief secretary to replace him.

He was buried at [Chatsworth](#) at a funeral attended by 300 MPs, brought from London by special train. A sculpture in the north-west corner of Cartmel Priory in made of Carrara mable resting on a chest of Derbyshire and Cornish marble. It was sculptured by Thomas Woolner. There is also a memorial to him at [Bolton Abbey](#).

### Career

**Lord Frederick Charles Cavendish** ([November 30, 1836](#) – [May 6, 1882](#)) was an [English Liberal](#) politician and *protégé* of the [Prime Minister](#), [William Ewart Gladstone](#), who was appointed to the post of [Chief Secretary for Ireland](#) in May [1882](#).

Born in [Eastbourne](#), [Sussex](#), he was the second son of [William Cavendish, 7<sup>th</sup> Duke of Devonshire](#), and the brother of [Spencer Cavendish, 8<sup>th</sup> Duke of Devonshire](#), who had also been Chief Secretary 1870-71. He married Lucy Lyttelton, granddaughter of Sir Stephen Glynne and niece of [William Gladstone](#)’s wife [Catherine](#).

Cavendish was returned to Parliament for the [West Riding of Yorkshire North](#) in 1865, and served under Gladstone as a [Junior Lord of the Treasury](#) from 1873 to 1874 and as

[Financial Secretary to the Treasury](#) from 1880 to 1882. In May 1882 he was appointed Chief Secretary for Ireland. Within hours of taking office, he and the Permanent Under Secretary, [Thomas Henry Burke](#), were assassinated in [Phoenix Park](#) in [Dublin](#) by an extreme [Irish](#) nationalist group known as the [Irish National Invincibles](#). The event was infamously known as the Phoenix Park Murders.



**London Stereoscopic Co. (London)**  
*The Late Lord Frederick Cavendish*  
1882

