

# **EDMONDSTOWN**

## **Mid Glamorgan**

EDMONDSTOWN LIES just south west of Porth in the Rhondda and is named after the Revd Thomas Edmondes, owner of Dinas Isaf Farm on which the houses were built in the early 1880s. The less common form of the surname with its added 'e' has led to misunderstandings at times; this is the reason why Edmondstown is spelt as it is. But the family was better known for many years for their misdeeds than for their contribution to the community

Thomas Edmondes was descended from a family whose members had been settled in the Cowbridge area for over two hundred years and who had gradually gained notoriety and prominence as landowners and public figures. In the early days the behaviour and general lifestyle of some of the members of the family left much to be desired. By the latter half of the nineteenth century the family as a whole had achieved considerable respectability.

Some of the varied events which mark the family's earlier history are worthy of recording here. Thomas Edmondes instituted the Michaelmas Fair at Cowbridge in 1750 and became Under-Sheriff of Glamorgan two years later. In 1755 he bought the manors of Hilary and Beaupre (Bewpur) for £6,500, taking a mortgage from Capel Hanbury of Pontypool, but there were soon indications that he owed money, a recurrent theme in the family for many years..

In 1759 Thomas Edmondes spent more than a thousand guineas purchasing a commission in the Guards for his son John, then aged twenty. While in the Guards John Edmondes met a fellow officer, John Dive, who invited him to the family home at Clarges Street, Piccadilly, and introduced him to his eighteen year old sister, Charlotte. John's marriage to Charlotte was eventually

agreed upon and complicated negotiations took place for a marriage settlement running into thousands of pounds. During the negotiations, which involved Charlotte's uncle and grandfather, Thomas Edmondson allegedly pretended that he held the manors of Beaupre and Cowbridge, worth £7,000 yearly, free of encumbrance, and which he would settle on his son and Charlotte Dive for a £10,000 portion. But some aspects of the settlement suggest that Thomas Edmondson was not entirely honest in his dealings with the Dives, in that he concealed a mortgage for £7,000. There are also baptism records showing that Thomas had two illegitimate children in 1767 and 1771.

John's wife Charlotte died in childbirth in 1770, and he remarried the following year to Margaret, daughter of John Deere of Hilton, Colwinston. In 1772 there was an extraordinary suit in Chancery over a long and protracted dispute about the settlement of John Edmondson's marriage to Charlotte Dive. Now remarried, John Edmondson brought the suit against his father, Thomas Edmondson, his former father-in-law, John Dive, and his surviving daughters, Charlotte and Anna Maria. It would appear that John Edmondson was trying to make some personal gain from this with a view to financing his second marriage, although it is uncertain how he fared in the case.

When John Edmondson died in 1774 much of his property, furniture and leases were sold off at a public auction to help pay his debts. Correspondence preserved by the National Museum of Wales shows that between the years 1772 and 1782 the Edmondsons were being pressed for the repayment of loans by various prominent Glamorgan families. John Edmondson's second wife Margaret survived him by some fifty eight years, dying on April 24 1836 aged ninety. Of this second marriage there were three daughters, Margaret, Frances and Caroline, and a son and heir, Thomas.

It was John's son, Thomas, who inherited what was left of the Edmondson estate. He was educated at Jesus College, Oxford and in 1802 married Mary, the daughter of Morgan Gwyn Davies of Cwm, Carmarthen. He became a major in the Glamorganshire Militia and was mayor of Cowbridge from 1828 till his death on September 12 1845. He was also a senior magistrate and Deputy Lieutenant of the county.

Thomas' younger son William, born in 1809, became the superintendent registrar at Bridgend and Cowbridge. In 1845 he

served on the provisional committee of the Rhondda and Ely Valleys Junction Railway. He also became the clerk and treasurer to the Board of the Bridgend and Cowbridge Guardians, but committed suicide in April 1855 to escape the consequences of the misappropriation of £1,200 belonging to the Poor Law Union. He shot himself in his office in Church Street, Cowbridge.

This incident appears to be the last of those which marred the history of a family, who, when they first became 'big' people in the neighbourhood were scoffed at by high and low as the parvenu gentry of the locality. Thomas Edmond's heir, also named Thomas, brought respectability and dignity to the family.

Born in 1806, Thomas Edmond, like his father, went to Jesus College, Oxford, and he gained a further degree at Cambridge. He became vicar of Llanblethian and Cowbridge and Welsh St Donats and held that appointment from 1835 to 1883. He was also an honorary canon of Llandaff. In addition, he was a magistrate and for a while held the post of master of Cowbridge Grammar School.

Thomas Edmond inherited considerable estates from his father, not only in the immediate Cowbridge area but also in the parishes of Llanwonno, Ystradyfodwg and Llantrisant and, according to the census returns of 1871, he owned over thirteen hundred acres in Glamorgan. During his life time the family fortunes began to take a turn for the better. Through careful management and with money bequeathed to his wife, Edmond became comparatively wealthy. The rather barren and low rented mountain farms in the parish of Ystradyfodwg were developed into mineral producing properties and brought in handsome royalties. In his will, dated April 1886, Edmond mentions these mines and also makes reference to building developments: 'two Farms and Lands called respectively Cynllwyndu situate in the parish of Ystradyfodwg and Dinas Isaf situate in the parish of Llantrisant'. The reference to Dinas Isaf, a property which had belonged to the Edmond family since 1752, would seem to infer that building work had been going on at Edmondstown.

Canon Edmond died at Cowbridge in 1892 and was buried with due ceremony in Cowbridge churchyard. He left three sons, Charles Gresford, Francis Quintin and Frederic William and also a daughter, Mary Elizabeth. Two of the sons who had prominent careers in the church are of special interest.

Charles Gresford, the eldest son, was born in 1838 and was

### *The Masters of the Coalfield*

educated at Cowbridge and Sherborne Schools and Trinity College, Oxford. He then became vicar of Boughrood, Radnorshire, in 1881 and vicar of Warren, Pembrokeshire the following year. In 1883 he was appointed archdeacon of St David's and in 1888 relinquished his post at Warren to return to St David's College, where he had been professor of Latin earlier in his career, this time as its principal. He died in 1893.

His brother, Frederic William (1840-1918) was educated at Cowbridge Grammar School and Jesus College, Oxford. He served as curate of Newcastle (Bridgend) from 1864 to 1867, rector of Michaelstone with St Brides-super-Ely from 1867 to 1873 and as rector of Coity from 1873 to 1901. From 1897 to 1913 he was archdeacon of Llandaff.

Charles Gresford's son Charles Gresford Irving (1870-1911) was articled for a while as a mining student in the Rhondda but subsequently opted for the life of a county gentleman and a connection with the auxiliary forces. He reached the rank of captain in the 3rd/4th battalion Worcestershire regiment in 1892. He subsequently served in the Glamorgan Yeomanry as a major.

His son Charles Thomas (1899-1969) rose to the rank of lieutenant-colonel in the army.