

EDWARDS or EDWARDES family, of Chirkland, Denbighshire, Pembrokeshire, and Kensington.

This ancient Denbighshire family, descended from **Tudur Trevor** (see **Trevor** of Brynkynallt, *ad. init.*), settled from an early date in the cymwd of Nanheudwy and branching out into Flintshire first come into prominence in the person of JOHN AB EDWARD, or EDWARDS (died 1498), receiver and chief forester of Chirkland under Sir W. Stanley. His son WILLIAM EDWARDS (died 1532) distinguished himself at Tournai (1513), was chosen by the last abbot of Valle Crucis as steward of the abbey's estates, and became a member of the bodyguard of Henry VIII, who leased lands to him in the lordship of Chirk (1526) when it fell to the Crown, made him constable of its castle (1529) and granted him the motto 'A fynno Duw derfydd.' His son, JOHN EDWARDS I, became deputy-constable of the castle (1543) and sheriff of Flintshire (1546) and Denbighshire (1547); he fought at Boulogne in 1544. The family clung to the old religion till the time of his son JOHN EDWARDS II (died 1585), of Plas Newydd or New Hall, who, although suspected in 1574 of sympathy with Mary, queen of Scots, and imprisoned in 1579 for having mass said in his house, publicly renounced the pope at Wrexham at the execution of **Richard Gwyn** in 1584.

JOHN EDWARDS III (died 1625), son of the above, at first followed his father in outward conformity, becoming a county magistrate (by 1595) and having also parliamentary ambitions, for which he prepared the way soon after his succession by granting leases with the written provision that the tenant should vote as his landlord directed (*E.H.R.*, lxx, 221-2). In 1588 he set up as candidate for the shire against **WILLIAM ALMER** of Pant Iocyn (see the article on that family), backed by the powerful Protestant influence of **Salisbury** of Llewenni, and, with the aid of his own Protestant father-in-law, **Roger Puleston** of Emral (elected for Flintshire), and the Catholic vote of Chirkland, he carried the day. **Almer** challenged the return in Star Chamber as irregular, an action which **Puleston** denounced in the Commons as a breach of privilege, but the session was over before a decision was reached. The whole county was stirred by the issue, and many riots and lawsuits ensued. In these and in later Star Chamber actions - one in which lord S. John of Bletsoe proceeded against Edwards (1594) for disorderly resistance to his rights as lord of Chirkland in succession to Leicester, and another (1595) in which Edwards's conduct as magistrate was impugned - much was made of his recusant background. His outward conformity ceased when, after Gunpowder Plot, new recusancy laws imposed a sacramental test and a new oath of allegiance. He was attainted and fined two-thirds of his estate under the Act (1614), and next year the elder **Sir T. Myddelton**, whose son's conduct as lord of Chirkland and owner of Chirk castle had been opposed by Edwards, denounced him as a 'dangerous recusant' whom it would be 'mischievous' to pardon. Alleged breaches of the peace when Plas Newydd was entered by sheriff's officers in search of recusants, and Edwards denounced them to Great Sessions, led to a further prosecution in Star Chamber by the Attorney-General (1619), and imprisonment in the Marshalsea. At the same time he was at odds with his own son and heir, who in 1624 petitioned Parliament for a Bill to reverse a degree for settlement of the estate which his father had obtained in the Court of Requests, the matter being eventually referred to arbitration by the Lords. In the midst of these troubles Edwards died in London.

His son, JOHN EDWARDS IV (died 1646), returned to the practice of conformity (doubtless the cause of the family quarrel). But he got the better of **Myddelton** in a contest over water rights, and as commissioner of array helped to raise forces against him in Denbighshire on the outbreak of civil war. For this a fine of £80 (at the rate of one-tenth) was levied on the estate in 1649 in the time of his son JOHN EDWARDS V (died 1674), who, after being reconciled both to the Commonwealth (which he served as sheriff in 1633) and to the **Myddeltons**, was protected from further molestation. The line came to an end in 1685 and the estate passed by marriage to the **Pulestons**, who sold the New Hall estate in 1721 with the consent of the representative of the original stock in the male line, FRANCIS EDWARDES (died 1725), M.P. for Haverfordwest, 1722-5. He had inherited the Pembrokeshire estates through his great-grandmother, who had married a younger son of Plas Newydd early in the 17th century. Francis Edwardes's marriage with the daughter and heiress of Robert Rich, 5th earl of Warwick, brought to his son WILLIAM EDWARDES in 1776 the Kensington estates of the Riches and the title 'baron Kensington' in the Irish peerage. The family kept its Pembrokeshire seat, frequently providing the county with lords-lieutenant and Haverfordwest with burgesses in Parliament until separate representation of the borough ceased in 1885, whereupon WILLIAM EDWARDES, 5th baron Kensington (died 1900), was made a peer of the United Kingdom.

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Images

Vincent Brooks Day & Son, "A whip" [William Edwardes, 4th Baron Kensington]

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