



**Kenrick Edisbury (Surveyor of the Navy,
1632-1638), and his descendants; being a brief
account of the family of Edisbury of Marchwiell,
co. Denbigh.**

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THE name of Kenrick Edisbury will be sought for in vain in the pages of the *Dictionary of National Biography* and other similar compilations, and naval books rarely mention him. Yet he held high office in the State, and performed his duties with conspicuous zeal and ability, a qualification greatly lacking in the naval administrators of the 17th century, with the notable exception of Samuel Pepys.

His grandson built a mansion in North Wales, which is now of great historic interest,¹ and other descendants have shared in episodes which were romantic and curious.

I think, therefore, that a brief memoir of this family will be acceptable, not only to members of this Society, but to all those who take an interest in the history of the Royal Navy.

¹ See *Chronicles of Erthig on the Dyke*, by Mrs. Wherry.



W. Coles Finch, Photo.

**Kenrick Edisbury,
Surveyor of the Navy, 1632-1638.**

(From the bust in Chatham Church.)

PART I.

KENRICK EDISBURY.



EDISBURY (spelt so) is the name of a Hundred and Parliamentary Division in the central portion of Cheshire, which formed part of the great forest of Delamere.

The word is of Saxon origin, and the *vill* is mentioned in Domesday. It would be in accordance with custom that so large and important a tract of land should, in time, give its name to a family;² but, strange to say, no such name appears in any known Charter or MS. relating to Cheshire, and nothing whatever appears to be known of the Edisbury family until the beginning of the 16th century. But we find the origin of this family in a statement by John Salisbury de Erbystoke,³ who wrote a genealogy of the Edisburys in 1676. He says:—

“Wilkin de Edisbury gent. had a sonne that was called by the sirname of Wilkinson, whose posterity continued the same for some generations, and then they reassumed the first sirname of Edisbury as follows. But how many descendants passed between Wilkin de Edisbury and the following William Edisbury I find not. William Edisbury *alias* Wilkinson purchased lands in Stryt-yr-Hwch in the parish of Marchwiel and married [blank]”⁴

He then gives the children as follows:—

- “I. William Edisbury of Marchwiel, eldest son of William Edisbury, married Jane, the daughter of Sently or Sontley.”⁵

² Camden says that “Edisbury Hill gave the name to an ancient family,” but he evidently based this simply on information supplied by Kenrick Edisbury, to whom he gave a grant of arms.

³ MS. in possession of J. F. Edisbury, Esq., J.P., of Wrexham, to whom I am indebted for valuable information.

⁴ We know it was Anne Crowfoot. See *post*, p. 28.

⁵ The Home Farm or old Manor House at Erddig, which gave its name to a family. We shall meet with this place later.

II. Robert Edisbury of Marchwiel *alias* Stryt-yr-Hwch, gent., married Jane, daughter of Kendrick ap Robert of Marchwiel Hall, gent., etc., descended from Llewelyn ap Madocke Voel of Marchwiel, who bore for his coate armour Ermin a Lyon Ramp. and a plain border azure.

III. James Edisbury *alias* Wilkinson.

IV. Elizabeth Edisbury *alias* Wilkinson."

From this we see the derivation of the surname is simple. We have first:—

Wilkin, *of* Edisbury, then

Wilkin, *son of* Edisbury, then

Wilkinson, *alias* Edisbury, and finally

Wilkinson Edisbury.

What brought the family to Marchwiel we do not know. The "William" first mentioned in Salisbury's list is given by other writers as "Richard."⁶ He married Anne Crowfoot (whose second husband was James Calveley, of Chester), and he purchased lands at Bedwal and Stryt-yr-Hwch, in the parish of Marchwiel, in the middle of the 16th century. Their second son, Robert Wilkinson *alias* Edisbury, succeeded to these estates, and he must have been comfortably off. He married Jane, daughter of Kenrick ap Robert ap Howel, of Marchwiel. He seems to have lived the life of a country gentleman at Marchwiel, but died and was buried at Chatham in 1610.⁷ He is called on his memorial tablet "Robert Wilkinson Edisbury."

Their son, Kenrick,⁸—the subject of this memoir—

⁶ Palmer, in his *County Townships of Wreaham*, gives Richard Wilkinson=Anne Crowfoot. Drake, in his *Hasted's History of Kent*, gives Richard Wilkinson, b. at Edisbury (whence family name) = Anne C. Mrs. Wherry, in *Chronicles of Erthig* (p. 9) quotes a deed of 1544 with the name of "Richard Edisbury of Bedwal, co. Denbigh."

⁷ See *post*, p. 33.

⁸ Kenrick = Welsh "Cynwrig"—a baptismal name frequently used in Powys Land. He was named after his maternal grandfather, Cynwrig ap Robert ap Howel, of Marchwiel.

succeeded to his father's estates, and to this property he constantly added during the next twenty years. He bought neighbouring lands from his mother's cousin, Robert Powell, of St. Andrew's, Holborn, in 1613; also from John Hope in 1638, Citizen and Armourer of London; also from William Lancelot in 1627, Citizen and Mercer of London. All these were doubtless Welshmen who had migrated to London from the neighbourhood of Wrexham. In 1630 he bought from the Lloyds of Ruabon their estate of Pentre-clawdd, and in 1634 actually acquired the toll and tallage of the town of Wrexham and the King's Mill there. He also purchased for his second son, Richard, another large property of several hundred acres.⁹

We must now go back to his public career. As a young man he elected to enter the civil side of the Naval Service, and we find him at Deptford Dockyard in 1625. He must have been there some time,¹⁰ as he writes to Secretary Nicholas urging "his long suit for the reversion of Mr. Fleming's place." In January, 1626, we find him explaining to Secretary Nicholas the history and succession of the officers termed "Masters Attendant upon the Commissioners of the Navy," and in December, 1626, he appears as Paymaster of the Navy, and, in company with other officials, is summoned by messenger to repair to the Star Chamber to answer before the Special Commissioners for inquiry into the state of the Navy.

Now a good many people are accustomed to think that the Navy was in a worse state in the time of Pepys

⁹ I take this information from Palmer's valuable *History of County Townships of the old Parish of Wrexham*, p. 225, one of the few books that give particulars of the Edisbury family.

¹⁰ We know that he was there in 1608, when his eldest son was born.

and under Charles II. than at any other period. But it was not so. It always seems to have been disgracefully managed, and it certainly was in a chaotic condition during the whole of the 17th century. In 1628, Coke, the Secretary of State,¹¹ was sent to Portsmouth on special service to regulate and improve affairs there. He disliked the task immensely, and on June 4 he writes and complains of the "charge laid on him and of dealing with men that neither know law or order," and further he objects to the indignity of a King's Secretary being made a clerk and accomptant to the officers of the Navy, and begs for a warrant appointing Mr. Edisbury to be Deputy Treasurer.¹² Again, on June 21, he writes of the unreasonable demands of pursers, boatswains, etc., ". . . that he is forced to hire the surgeon of the garrison to look after sick men on shore, though the surgeons of the ships haunt the taverns all day. As to complaints as to supply of victuals—beer sent to the *Garland* and refused as stinking, on examination found very good and wholesome, and much better than any on the Admiral's table. Again begs to be recalled."

So Edisbury was sent to help him at Portsmouth, and on Nov. 14 the former writes:—

"The Captains and pursers are studying to spin time to let their pay run on, and labour to disable the repairing of their ships there."

a little later he had an attack of ague, and asks

"Licence to return as soon as the paying-off is done." Like Coke, he evidently was not enamoured of his

¹¹ Sir John Coke, 1563-1644. Fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge, Deputy Treasurer of the Navy 1591, Commissioner of the Navy 1621-36. He held various other offices. Hannay, in *The Royal Navy* Vol. I., p. 157, says he was "a model public servant, though a somewhat mean-spirited man."

¹² Where no other reference is given, the quotations are from the *Calendar of State Papers, Domestic Series*, under the years mentioned.

office, and saw clearly the great defects and glaring abuses of the Dockyard system. As early as 1627 he complained of

“Everyone almost being director of his own work, for want of some able understanding man to regulate the inferiors, as it was while the Commissioners had the government.”

But the Navy Board were not long in making up their minds that *he* was the “able understanding man,” and in January, 1629, formally appointed him “Assistant to the Officers of the Navy, to assist in all manner of payments to mariners, and to keep books for the Commissioners,” etc.

Edisbury now commenced a busy life in going to the various Dockyards, and in May, 1629, he writes from Chatham to say that he “had discerned much improvidence,” and asserts that “170 extraordinary workmen can be reduced to 85.” But this reforming zeal was not to everyone’s liking, and in May, 1630, he writes and recommends Edward Lockier as cook of the *Victory*, because “he had almost lost his life by a malicious stab from a surgeon,” which was intended for Edisbury himself. This happened at Deptford. At the same Dockyard Henry Goddard, the builder of the *Henrietta Maria*, in 1632, complains to Secretary Coke of want of timber to proceed with the ship;

“That he has been catechized by Sir Kenelm Digby and Captain Pett, at the instance of Kenrick Edisbury, and his son and foreman have been ill-treated. However, he will continue his work and not say, as Andrew Burrell did, that he would as soon build a ship in hell as in Deptford yard.”

Edisbury’s energy and zeal received due reward, for on December 17, 1632, he was appointed to the office of Surveyor of the Navy, and he was, in this office, the immediate predecessor of Sir William Batten,

the coadjutor of Pepys.¹³ His emoluments were:—Forty pounds per annum as salary, eightpence per day for a clerk, four shillings per day as travelling expenses, and eight pounds per annum for coach hire.

Edisbury was not the sort of man to be “bluffed” by shipbuilders like Henry Goddard, for he was a keen observer¹⁴ of the way in which ships were carelessly designed or more carelessly built, and writes to Nicholas in 1633:—

“I never yet knew any ship built by day-work but the shipwrights have made them of greater burden than the warrants mentioned, as you may discern by this new ship, which I am persuaded will prove 200 tons greater than she was appointed.” In January, 1638, in conjunction with other officers, he was made a Justice of the Peace for Kent and other counties.

He died in August, 1638, at his temporary official residence at the Hill House, at Chatham, and was buried at St. Mary’s Church,¹⁵ which has always been looked upon as the “Dockyard” Church. Curiously enough, his father also died at Chatham, Sept. 8, 1610, probably while on a visit to his son, who, though living at Deptford, would have to spend some time at Chatham when the Dockyard pay was disbursed.¹⁶ On the west wall of the Church are the following tablets:—

¹³ Edisbury succeeded Sir Thomas Aylesbury, who was the first of the Surveyors.

¹⁴ Oppenheim, in his *History of the Administration of the Royal Navy*, p. 281, says “He was perhaps the most observant and energetic of the chief officers.”

¹⁵ Readers of the *Ingoldsby Legends* will remember “The Parish Clerk of Chatham,” an amusing tale connected with this Church.

¹⁶ His mother died at Deptford. A tablet in S. Nicholas’ Church there records “Jane Edisbury, widow, mother of Kenrick Edisbury, gent., Paymaster of the Navy under Sir William Russell, Knt., Treasurer, ob. 16 Mar. 1618.”

Neere this place lieth interred
 The Body of Kenricke Edisbvry of March-
 Wiell in the County of Denbigh
 Esquire, Surveyor of His Majtys Navie.
 He was a good Christian, a
 Faithful Servant, a loving Husband
 A Kinde Father and a charitable man
 And died The 27th. of August 1638.
 Leaving issue by Mary his Wife
 (Daughter and heire of Edward Pe-
 ters, alias Harding of Rochester
 Gent.) John and Richard.

Here lieth buried near
 This place the body of
 Robert Wilkinson
 Edisbury Gent. who dwelt
 In Marchwiell in the
 County of Denbigh
 Who died the VIII day
 September A.D. 1610.

Immediately above, in a niche, was placed a fine marble bust of the Surveyor, but at the time of the restoration of the Church some years ago the niche was done away with, and the bust placed higher up the wall on a marble slab supported on two brackets.¹⁷ It is a fine piece of work, and from two prominent warts on the side of the face it would seem that this bust was certainly taken from a death mask.¹⁸ It will

¹⁷ Owing to this removal the bust has got separated from the tablet appertaining to it, and no one in recent times seems to have understood to whom it referred, or to have appreciated this memorial of a distinguished public servant. A former Rector of Chatham published a list of the principal monuments in the Church, but entirely omitted the Edisburys.

¹⁸ Mr. W. C. Finch, of Chatham, obligingly photographed the bust for me, by kind permission of the Rev. Dr. Godfrey Burr, Rector of Chatham; and my best thanks are due to my old friend, Mr. Godfrey C. Catt, of Chatham, for arranging this matter, and for other valuable help.

be seen that Edisbury is wearing a gown of office, and that such was the custom is, I believe, a fact not hitherto known.

Salisbury says that the arms of the Edisbury family are "azure, a unicorn passant regardant or; and for the crest an unicorn's head with his neck erased or." But Kenrick Edisbury obtained a grant of arms from William Camden as follows:—

"Azure, a unicorn or.¹⁹ Crest: on a mount vert, a raven sable, supporting with the dexter foot a staff with a pendant per fess azure and gules;" and it is certified thus:—

"The arms and crest of Mr. Kenrick Edisbury of Edisbury and Merthwell (Marchwiell), County Denbigh, servant of King James, Surveyor of His Majesty's Navy. Exemplified, ratified, and confirmed to him and his posterity.

Signed, William Camden,
Clarencieux.

Examined ye 12th day of October 1638 by us William Le Neve *Clarencieux*, John Phillpot *Somerset*, W. Beauchamp *Portcullis*."

In the *Visitation of Kent* John Philpot, Rouge Dragon, Deputy to William Camden, Clarencieux, gives the arms of Edgebury *alias* Wilkinson:—

"Azure, a unicorn passant regardant or. Crest: on a mound vert, a bird sable supporting a pennon azure and gules, the ends flotant, the top argent, thereon a cross of the fourth; staff or."

As Camden died in 1623 it would seem that Edisbury's naval position must have been considered an important one even before he was made

¹⁹ The unicorn is *passant regardant*. "A Unicorn," says our old Chester Antiquary, Randle Holme, "is the emblem of strength, and signifies the bearer to be a lover of his country; one that eschews vice and loves purity of life; is a generous warrior who will die rather than be captivated." It was not inappropriate, for I believe Kenrick Edisbury certainly loved his country and led a good life. At a later period the family adopted a motto, *Servabo fidem*.

Surveyor in 1632, or he would not have been granted a naval pennon. Edisbury was proud of this coat, and frequently sealed his official letters with it.²⁰

Edisbury's death was a distinct loss to the Navy. "Now that Mr. Edisbury is dead the necessity of an able man there will be the greater," say the Dockyard officials writing from Portsmouth on August 31, 1638; and there is little doubt that his reforms and stern measures caused him to be feared and perhaps disliked. Had we lived in those times probably we should have heard many say, "You'll have old Edisbury after you." No wonder then that his ghost was supposed to haunt his old official residence at Chatham!

Twenty-three years after his death, on April 8, 1661, Batten (who had succeeded Edisbury in office) and Pepys went on naval business to Chatham Dockyard, and were lodged for the night in the "Hill House" close by. Pepys says:—

"Then to the Hill house at Chatham where I never was before and I found a pretty pleasant house and am pleased with the arms that hang up there.²¹ Here we supped very merry, and late to bed, Sir William telling me that old Edgeborrow,²² his predecessor, did die and walk in my Chamber, did make me somewhat afeared, but not so much as for mirth's sake I did seem—So to bed in the Treasurer's

²⁰ It will be seen that the naval pendant (as it was called) was at first a small affair, but seems to have been gradually lengthened. Perhaps Edisbury made it correspond to his official promotion, so that while he started like a Commodore he left off like an Admiral! The "Edgebury *alias* Wilkinson" is worth notice.

²¹ It was an Elizabethan house of brick and timber, with three projecting bays, and stood on the site of the present Marine Barracks at Chatham. On the ground floor was a large pay office, and above was bedroom accommodation for the Paymaster and his clerks when they came to Chatham Dockyard. There is a small but pretty sketch of it by the Dockyard officials in the British Museum.—*King's MS.*, 43.

²² Curiously enough, on April 14, 1638, we find his name in a Commission from the King spelt as "Kenrick Edgeborough." This corroborates Pepys, and shows that it was the ordinary pronunciation. It was merely going back to the Saxon "burgh."

Chamber. April 9. And lay and slept well till 3 in the morning, and then waking, and by the light of the moon I saw my pillow (which overnight I flung from me) stand upright, but not bethinking myself what it might be I was a little afeared, but sleep overcame all and so lay till high morning."

Now the Hill House was not the permanent residence of the Surveyor, and two days later Pepys, with Lady Batten (who accompanied her husband on this inspection) went "to see Mr. Commissioner Pett's house, he and his family being absent," and here, says Pepys:—

"I wondered how My Lady Batten walked up and down with envious looks to see how neat and rich everything is, (and indeed both the house and garden most handsome) saying she would get it, for it belonged formerly to the Surveyor of the Navy." (April 9, 1661).

Pepys had no high opinion of Lady Batten, and this little incident shows how unscrupulous she was, unless, indeed, she was merely joking. We see that Pepys admired the Hill House.

Now in the following month (May, 1661) the Duke of York wrote to the Navy Board recommending that the lease of the Hill House should be bought by them, if it could be obtained at a reasonable rate, as the said house "is very convenient for the Service of His Majesty's Navy." We may be sure that this was another of those secret suggestions that James used to get from Pepys, who no doubt sat at the Navy Board chuckling to himself when the letter was read.

Two years later (July 11, 1663) Pepys was again at Chatham Dockyard and at the Hill House. He says:—

"So, late to bed, and Mr. Wayth being gone, I lay above in the Treasurer's bed and slept well. About one or two in the morning, the curtain of my bed being drawn waked

me, and I saw a man stand there, by the inside of my bed, calling me 'French dogg' 20 times, one after another, and I starting, as if I would get out of the bed, he fell alauding as hard as he could drive, still calling me 'French dogg' and laid his hand on my shoulder.

At last, whether I said anything or no, I cannot tell, but I perceived the man, after he had looked wistly upon me, and found that I did not answer him to the names that he called me by, which was 'Salmon,' Sir G. Cartaret's Clerk, and 'Robert Maddox,' another of the clerks, he put off his hat on a suddaine, and forebore laughing, and asked who I was, saying 'Are you Mr. Pepys?' I told him yes, and now being come a little better to myself, I found him to be Tom Willson, Sir W. Batten's clerk, and fearing he might be in some melancholy fit, I was at a loss what to do or say. At last, I asked him what he meant. He desired my pardon for that he was mistaken, for he thought verily, not knowing of my coming to lie there, that it had been Salmon the Frenchman, with whom he had intended to have made some sport.

So I made nothing of it, but bade him good night, and I after a little pause, to sleep again, being well pleased that it ended no worse, and being a little the better pleased with it, because it was the Surveyor's clerk, which will make sport when I come to tell Sir W. Batten of it, it being a report that old Edgeborough, the former Surveyor who died here, do now and then walk."

The following morning Sir W. Batten's clerk again came to apologize to Pepys.

"July 12, Lord's Day. up and meeting Tom Wilson he asked my pardon again, which I did easily give him, telling him only that it was well I was not a woman with child for it might have made me miscarry."

Pepys returned to London the next day—

"and so home and to Sir W. Batten where I stayed telling him and Sir W. Minnes, and Mrs. Turner, with great mirth, my being frighted at Chatham by young Edgeborough."

Pepys is always an interesting psychological problem. Here he was in a strange house, strongly reputed to be

haunted, and he finds a man in the middle of the night standing by him and calling him a "French dog." But he shows no fear, he only thinks the man is mazed or sleep-walking! How many of us under similar circumstances would have been so calm and collected? Yet this same man and his wife two years earlier lay shivering with fear in bed lest a little office boy, whom they heard moving about in his bedroom, should do them harm! The truth is Pepys was very matter of fact. Ghosts, goblins, and fairies did not interest him, hence his calling *Midsummer Night's Dream* "an insipid, ridiculous play." He was only interested in, and believed in, what was going on around him, and that is why he gives us no particulars of his school days or University life—in fact he rarely refers to the past unless it is suddenly brought to his mind by some person or incident.

One other point. Pepys shows great good nature. To be disturbed in this way, and by a young jackanapes of a clerk, was sufficient to make a Secretary of the Navy very angry. But we see that Pepys took the whole thing as a great joke, and was exceedingly kind to Tom Wilson, and soon put him at his ease.

It is not a little remarkable that Edisbury and Pepys should be linked together in this singular way, for they were the two great naval administrators in the 17th century that did their best for the Navy, and left the impress of their work upon it.

The scene of their labours at Chatham—the interesting old Hill House—no longer exists. In the eighteenth century its site was required for some new barracks, so the Hill House disappeared, and with it the ghost of "Old Edgeborough" disappeared also.

PART II.

KENRICK EDISBURY'S DESCENDANTS.



F his wife, Mary Peters,²³ we catch only one faint glimpse in a letter from Edisbury to Nicholas, March 16, 1638.

“As soon as we came home from Ratcliffe, my wife made the mouth-water I told you of, which you will receive in a glass by the bearer. It must be made warm in a silver porringer and then ‘garble’ it in the mouth as hot as you can endure it.” By her he had two sons, John and Richard. John was born in 1608 at Deptford. He matriculated at Queen’s College, Oxford, April 30, 1624, aged 16, as “son of Kenrick Edisbury of Deptford Stran²⁴ gentleman.” He entered the Navy Office like his father, and in April, 1636, the officers of the Navy certify to 6 names of persons suitable for Clerk of the Cheque at Portsmouth, and one is “John Edisbury one of the Controller’s Clerks who has executed the office during suspension.”

In 1634 he became a Barrister-at-law of the Middle Temple. Soon after his father’s death he seems to

²³ Salisbury says, “Mary daughter to Edward Harding of Harding of Bedfordshire. Bore, gules 3 Greyhounds Current in Barwise or, Collar and Terretts azure.” Edisbury’s funeral tablet says, “Peters alias Harding,” and as Peters is a well-known name about Rochester it is probable that Harding had married an heiress in the neighbourhood and so assumed her name. This was sometimes done, and thus an hereditary alias was not unknown. In the *Herald’s Visitation of Wiltshire* in 1623 three families are given with an *alias*, and we see that Edisbury himself is thus described by the Kent Herald. (See *ante*, p. 34). Mary Peters herself was an heiress, and doubtless it was with her money that Edisbury paid for his numerous land purchases. Lady Margaret, relict of Sir John Hawkins, bequeathed “my diamond ring which my niece Trevor gave me on her death bed” to “Mary Wilkinson.” Probably this was Edisbury’s wife, as he and Lady Margaret both came from Wales. [*Drake*, p. 21.]

²⁴ Stran, Stron, or Strand. Later the name was confined to the low-lying part of Deptford near the river. Deptford Strand was originally called West Greenwich.

have left the Naval Service and settled down on the Pentreclawdd Estate. In 1653 he bought the Erddig Estate, and Palmer²⁵ gives a document of that year wherein Richard Davies, "Citizen and Vintner of London," and his wife Catharine, the owners of a large portion of the lands around Erddig, acknowledge the rights of John Edisbury to "13 messuages, 6 gardens, 6 orchards, 2 water mills, 300 acres of land, 60 of meadow, 200 of pasturage, 50 of wood, 50 of moor, 50 of heath and bruery,²⁶ in Erthig, Wrexham, Sontley, and Marchwiel."²⁷

John Edisbury, with the property at Bedwal, Strytyr-Hwch and Erddig, had now a very fine estate, and one can hardly be surprised that he gave up the worries of an official life for the delights of a country gentleman, especially as he did not arrive at any high naval position.²⁸ It is possible, however, that he may have been compelled to relinquish office by the Parliamentarians, for he was supposed to have Royalist tendencies, and is said to have taken up arms for the King. Anyhow, he was considered a disaffected person, and was taken prisoner by General Mytton after a skirmish at Bangor-on-Dee in 1643. An old diary says:—

"Feb. 16, 1643. Colonel Millar came over Bangor Bridge in the morning, and took Sir Gerard Eyton, Sir Robert Eyton, John Eyton, Sir John's brother, all in the house of Sir Gerard and plundered it. Thence he went and took Mr.

²⁵ *Townships of Wrexham.*

²⁶ "Bruery," from old French "Bruyere"="Heath, ling, heather . . . also a heath, or heathie ground."—*Cotgreave's Dictionary.*

²⁷ In *Chronicles of Erthig* a somewhat similar document is quoted as Sep. 15, 1619, but this is either an error or refers to the other portion of the Erddig property. John was only eleven years old in 1619, and if he had any property as a minor it must have been bought by his father.

²⁸ Palmer makes a slip in calling him "Surveyor of the Navy."

Edisbury and Mr. John Jeffreys, Mr. Humphrey Dimock, of Willington; and his son Mr. Kyffin Vicar of Bangor and his brother William Kyffin of Llanfyllin that came to visit him.”²⁹ He was imprisoned, but soon released on exchange, and subsequently changed sides, so that his loyalty was not very deep.

In 1647 he was admitted by John Bradshaw,³⁰ Chief Justice of Chester, to the office of Prothonotary for the Counties of Denbigh and Montgomery, which he held until the Restoration in 1660; and was also Chief Steward of the Lordship of Oswestry. But, what was more important, he was also Steward of the Lordship of Chirk to Sir Thomas Myddelton,³¹ the celebrated Parliamentary Commander, from 1645 to 1661. There are many references to him in the *Chirk Castle Accounts*.³² He went to live at Erddig

²⁹ From the *Penbedw MSS.*, quoted in the *Cambrian Quarterly Magazine*, Vol. I. (1830), p. 60.

³⁰ The notorious regicide.

³¹ The offer of this appointment and his friendship with Myddelton may have had a great deal to do with his change of sides.

³² Printed privately by Mr W. M. Myddelton:—

Jan. 16, 1646.	Pa ^d to M ^r John Edisbury his fee and for Councell due at Chras last 1646 as Steward	10	0	0
June 9, 1659	Paid M ^r John Maddocks of Wrexham M ^r Edisbury his clarke for writeing the exemplificacon of the fine passed by Sir Thomas Myddelton the elder upon his lands	0	10	0
1660				
Dec 4	The			
Steward	Paid John Edisbury Esquire by M ^r Pecke of being his sallarie for the year ended the Llan- last of December 1659 for tending the gollen Court of Chirke and Chirkelands as Steward thereof whereof allowed in M ^r Pecks Sallary rents for 2 years	10	0	0
for the year 1659				
1661	Paid John Edisbury Esquire by his servant Hugh Williams of Erthig for 6 oxen had of him about Sep. 1659	30	0	0
June 1				

Hall in 1660. He married, as his first wife, Martha, daughter of Joshua Downing, of Limehouse and Chatham, a Commissioner of the Navy and J.P. for Kent, by whom he had three sons and three daughters. She died in 1657, and was buried at Ruabon.³³

His second marriage arose from a very romantic episode, which must now be related, and is generally called "The celebrated Grosvenor Duel."

In the month of August, 1661, Roger Grosvenor, the eldest son and heir of Sir Richard Grosvenor, second baronet, and ancestor of the Duke of Westminster, had arranged for one of his footmen to run a race.³⁴ On the evening before the race took place he said to his cousin, Mrs. Houghton,³⁵ that "if any one rode near his footman he would kill him or be killed by him."³⁶ It is evident that he anticipated some foul play. The incidents which followed seem to have been hushed up, and historians tell us little, but the usual account is that a certain Hugh Roberts, of Hafod-y-bwch, near Wrexham, apparently *did* interfere with the race, and Grosvenor meeting him soon after-

³³ 1657 Jan 26 "Paid to the poore of Ruabon at M^{ris}.
Edisbury her buryall xij^d and for
our horses at Ruabon vj" 1 6
(*Chirk Castle Accounts.*)

No memorial exists at Ruabon Church.

³⁴ This was a favourite diversion of the aristocracy. In the MS. diary of Sir Thos. Mainwaring of Peover we find:—

"Ap. 5. 1649.

at Hurleston at a footrace between Tom Wilbraham of Woodhey and Peter Wilbraham's boys.

July 11. 1649.

at the forest of Delamere to see a foote race betwixt my Cousin Mynshulls man and a Shropshire miller."

³⁵ She was Lettice, d. of Sir Francis Gamull by Christian sister of Sir Richard Grosvenor, and married, as her second husband, Gilbert Houghton of Houghton Tower.—*Cheshire Sheaf*, July 17, 1912.

³⁶ See the *Cavalier's Note Book* of William Blundell.

wards, slashed him with his whip and drew upon him. Roberts, who was young and active, whipped out his sword and ran Roger Grosvenor through the body so that the latter died within a few hours, not however before he admitted that it was his own fault.

A few days after his death, namely on the 26 August, bail of £100 was accepted from Sir Richard Grosvenor, of Eaton, baronet—to appear at the next Crownmote Court and prefer bills of indictment against Hugh Roberts the younger, of Hafod-y-bwch, co. Denb., gentleman,³⁷ for wounding and killing of Roger Grosvenor, esquire, and likewise against Kenrick Edisbury and Francis Edisbury,³⁸ gentlemen, for “aydeing and abetting.”

Certain citizens entered into recognisances to give evidence and on Sep. 6 the two Edisburys were released on bail, but Roberts remained in the Northgate prison until Sep. 24 when he gave bail for £200, “and found sureties for £100 each in John Brerewood, of Chester, esquire,³⁹ and Thomas Parnell,⁴⁰ of Chester, iron-monger—to appear at the next Crownmote Court held in the Comon hall of pleas to perform the order of the Court, and, in the meantime, to present His Majesty’s gracious letters patent of pardon.”⁴¹

³⁷ Matriculated at Brasenose College, Oxford, July 25, 1655, and student of Inner Temple 1656; m. Anne, sister and heir of Richard Jones, alias Wynn, of Plas Newydd in the Parish of Llanfair Dyffryn Clwyd. His father, generally called Major Roberts, had married as his second wife, Mary, daughter of Sir Richard Grosvenor and sister to Roger, so by this marriage, Roberts and Roger Grosvenor were connected.

³⁸ The two sons of the Surveyor’s second son Richard. They were living a lazy dissolute life at Erddig. See *post*, 48.

³⁹ Married Sidney, third daughter of Sir F. Gamull, and cousin to Roger Grosvenor.

⁴⁰ Sheriff in 1649.

⁴¹ Chester Crown Mote Court [*Corp’n MSS. Mayor’s Book*, 1660-1]. For further legal particulars see *Cheshire Sheaf*, July 10 and 17, 1912, from whence this information is taken.

It was no light thing to have killed the heir of the Grosvenors, and Roger was a *persona grata* at Court, and had been nominated one of the Knights of the Royal Oak. But Edisbury must have had powerful friends, and moreover, his sworn statement, on which the pardon was based, does not seem to have been contradicted or refuted in any way.

From this free pardon⁴² we learn a great deal, and can surmise more. The document has never been printed, but as it is in official Latin, with many repetitions and contractions, I have thought it best to give merely a summary.

The race for footmen had taken place on the Roodee on Aug. 21st and at four p.m. Hugh Roberts accompanied by Francis and Kenrick Edisbury was making his way home viâ the old Wrexham Road, and in Handbridge (called as a township "Claverton") they met, suddenly, Roger Grosvenor, who had apparently lost his wager by foul means and considered Hugh Roberts (and no doubt rightly so) as the cause thereof. Grosvenor without more ado "made for" Roberts, "And the same Roger Grosvenor with a sword which he held in his right hand attacked the said Hugh Roberts and reviled him. And the said Hugh Roberts fearing lest through the aforesaid Roger Grosvenor he sh^d be in peril of his life fled from him, retreating the whole time until at length he c^d retreat no further."

But Grosvenor followed him up and again "savagely struck at him so that he w^d then & there have killed him if he had not defended himself and so the defen-

⁴² *Public Record Office—Chester 2. 323, Recognisance Roll 13/14 car: 2.* For the loan of this document I am greatly indebted to C. T. Gatty, Esq., who is now writing a history of "Mary Davies," the so-called "Milkmaid of Belgravia," who married Roger Grosvenor's son, and so brought the valuable London property into the Grosvenor family.

dant being absolutely in fear of death and to save his life & by unavoidable necessity struck Roger Grosvenor with a sword [*Anglice* a rapier] which he had in his right hand at the time & ran him through the lower part of his stomach, giving him a mortal wound."

From this mortal wound Grosvenor lingered in Chester until the next day when he died. There was no contradiction to this plain statement of fact sworn to by Hugh Roberts, and the King granted a free pardon.

Headstrong and stupid as Grosvenor was, one cannot help being sorry for his untimely end. Had he challenged Roberts to a duel he would doubtless have been quite justified, but this sudden attack in a public place was no duel, though it has always been so described.

Roger Grosvenor was buried at Eccleston on Aug. 29, 1661, aged 33. He had married Christian,⁴³ fifth daughter of Sir Thomas Myddelton, of Chirk, and her father and mother attended the funeral and did what they could for the daughter.⁴⁴ Christian was not inconsolable, and did not long remain a widow, for in a short time she married, strange to say, John Edisbury, who was then a widower aged 53, so that

⁴³ Generally called Christiana in all histories, but this is only the Latinized form of her name, as found on funeral tablets, etc. They had six children:—Thomas—who succeeded his grandfather as 3rd baronet and married Mary Davies "the milkmaid"—Robert, John, Roger, Sydney, and Anne.

⁴⁴ 1661. Aug 23. Paid to M^{rs} Grosvenor at Chester by way of loan to discharge about necessaries to interr and towards her husband's funerall
p Peter Davies 26 Aug. to go to Chester ... 50 0 0
Aug 28. Paid in our journey to M^r Grosvenor's funerall for shoeing iiiij^d for all our horses being xen in number ij^s, to the poore at Eccleston xija, for a letter that came from the Earl of Carberry by the post xij^d, in all 0 4 4

she actually allied herself to a family that was implicated in her first husband's death.⁴⁵ But she must have known John Edisbury very well indeed seeing that he had been for so long her father's steward, and certainly no one was better qualified to look after her interests. It is obvious also that he was by no means remiss in looking after his own. Christian's son, Sir Thomas Grosvenor, being a minor, was placed under the guardianship of his mother and stepfather. Christian died in 1670, and an action was at once brought by the boy through the other guardian, Thomas Cholmondeley, of Vale Royal, against John Edisbury, who in 1675 was obliged to relinquish his trust, give up a "basin and ewer,"⁴⁶ the property of the boy, and reimburse £12,000⁴⁷ "in full satisfaction of profit received for his use by M^r Edisbury and his late wife, mother of the complainant."

John died in 1677, and was buried at Ruabon April 27, and in his will he expressly desired "to be buryed without any scutchion or funeral pompe & if it be with any convenience in the morning to avoid that usual disorder & drunkenness that too often attends the funeralls of our country."

He was evidently thinking of the great funeral of Sir Thomas Myddelton, which he had superintended as Steward, when the whole country side attended, and the feasting and drinking was on a gigantic scale.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ Mr. J. F. Edisbury, of Wrexham, possesses an oil painting which is said to represent John and Christian together with an old servant Dorothy.

⁴⁶ Probably christening presents.

⁴⁷ According to Palmer; £1,200 in *Chronicles of Erthig*.

⁴⁸ The cost was about £18,000, and cooks and a turnspit were hired from Chester, Wrexham, and Ellesmere.

"There never was and never shall
Be seen so great a funerall"

sang the Chirk Castle poet.

In addition to his Welsh estate he died possessed of lands in Staffordshire. By his second marriage with Christian Myddelton, John had no children, but by his first wife, Miss Downing, he had three sons and three daughters, and his eldest son, Josua, or Joshua,⁴⁹ succeeded to the estate.

We will now leave the direct line for a time and turn to RICHARD EDISBURY, the second son of the Surveyor. He was born at Chatham, entered into business in London, and died (probably) in 1654, and this is practically all we know about him. Salisbury states:—

“Richard Edisbury a Woollen Draper at ye 3 Colts in Budge Row in London, married [Anne] Daughter⁵⁰ of Sir Francis Bickley of Kent, and have issue:—

1. Kenrick eldest son married [Grace] daughter to — Cooper of Wrexham, are both now living in France 1676 and have issue.
2. Francis, 2nd son married Eleanor daughter and heir to Tho: Jones of Plas-Oddiar-y-Clawdd in y^e Parish of Ruabun, Gent. both now living A.Dⁿⁱ. 1676 and have issue.”

These children were the two “ayders and abettors” of Grosvenor’s death,⁵¹ and we know a good deal more about *them*. They lived close to Roberts, who was a tenant of theirs, and it appears highly probable that they with him had hatched some plot against the

⁴⁹ He was so named after his grandfather, Joshua Downing, but he always signed his name “Josua.”

⁵⁰ From an entry in the *Chirk Castle Accounts* we learn that Mrs. Richard Edisbury died in 1663 in London—

“Disbursements in going to London 10 Oct 1663.

Oct 23. Paid for a coach for my M^r and lady to goe to M^{rs} Edisbury’s funerall 4 6”

⁵¹ “Paid the Constable and the men that went to apprehend ffancis Edisbury 0 1 0”

Chirk Castle Accounts Aug 23, 1661.

footrace, that Grosvenor got wind of this beforehand, and hence his threat. That they were quite capable of doing so if it should turn out to their pecuniary advantage is certain, for their life was one constant evasion of creditors. They paid no attention to their wives and children, but lived at Erddig, during the absence of Joshua, and spent their whole time in cock-fighting, horse-dealing,⁵² and racing, etc., and in writing to Joshua to pay their debts. A few particulars of these two brothers will be of interest.

Kenrick, the eldest, is described as of Grofft-y-Castell,⁵³ near Gresford, and he sold his share of the family estate at Hafod-y-bwch to Francis. He matriculated at Jesus College, Oxford, July 25, 1655. He seems to have been fond of mechanics, and amongst other inventions took out a patent for carriage rollers.⁵⁴ He refers to them in a letter, May 16, 1694:—

“ Providence hath hitherto so crosst me in all my undertakings, that I dare not hope for success in anything, otherwise this business of the Rollers would yet seeme to me to be likely (in time) to recover all, for I heare they are made and approved of in many places, but I am at present in noe manner of condition to prosecute it.”

Again, on June 6, 1694, he says:⁵⁵—

“ I went last week into Shropshire in hopes to have gotten a little money of M^r Kinaston of Hordley and M^r Owen of Cundover who have made Rolling Carts, but they

⁵² A certain Mr. Jeffreys complains of a horse sold to him by Kenrick, and declares the horse to be “unsound and moons-blind, and sometimes at the change and full of the moone could not see at all.”

⁵³ Now known as The Roft. The old fortification still exists.

⁵⁴ *William and Mary*, Pat. 3. What these exactly were is not known, but Mr. Philip Yorke kindly informs me that he thinks they had to do with the milling process, but the letter given below would seem to point to vehicular use.

⁵⁵ *Chronicles of Erthig*, p. 91.

both put me off at present, pretending not to have been fully satisfied that anything was due to me, though I shewed them my pattend, soe that my going was but the occasion of spending that little money I had left."

Money was very scarce. On June 6, 1694, he writes: "Confined to Erthigg for want of money. I am master of but one shilling, w^h is too small a stock to venture abroad with."

Towards the end of his life, however, he obtained some small office under the Admiralty at Deptford, and actually tried to pay off some of his debts. He also became a Socinian.

His daughter Grace says, Sep. 3, 1696:—

"My father is now a very good husband, but his place is not near soe good as we heard it was in the country, for it is but as the first account he gave you of it. Blessed be God it is what makes him live comfortably & spares a little money w^h he payes as fast as he can, & the desire he has of paying his detts makes me hope if it pleases God to spair his life some years he will be out of debt, w^h I am sure will be a great comfort to me. My father is very kind to me, but above all his kindness in not offering me any of his Socinian books, nor saying anything to me of those errors I take the most kindly, he has never said one word to me of it."

To his Cousin Joshua he writes:—

"As for Socianisme it is not easy to avoid discoursing of it because every body baites me about it but I do not speake of it unless with such as I have reason to expect instruction from, it is certainly our greatest concernment to know God and his son, Jesus Christ, for this, our Saviour tells us, is life eternall w^{ch} I hope we shall both attaine to by the satisfaction our blessed Saviour hath made to almighty God for our sins w^{ch} I agree wth you is that by w^{ch} only we can be saved."

He died sometime before March 25, 1719.

Francis, the second son of Richard, was worse than Kenrick, and certainly did not equal him in ability.

He lived the same sort of life at Erddig,⁵⁶ but never made any attempt to discharge his liabilities. He was buried at Wrexham Oct. 26, 1706.

It is sad to think that these two grandsons of the Surveyor were so unscrupulous and unbusiness-like, but mismanagement of money runs through the whole Edisbury family. Of the fourteen children born to them (each had seven) there is nothing to be said except that Kenrick's second son was named Kenrick, and entered the Navy Pay Office, as became one bearing that name, and Francis' son, Richard, got some small appointment in connection with rope-making, probably at Plymouth Dockyard.

We now return to the direct line, in the person of Joshua Edisbury.

He was born in 1638. Matriculated at Brasenose College, Oxford, Dec. 9, 1653, was J.P. for the County of Denbigh, and served the office of High Sheriff in 1682. He married Grace, third and youngest daughter of Sir Henry Delves, of Doddington, Bart.⁵⁷ Had he been contented with the nice estate to which he succeeded, and managed it well, he might have led a happy life, and perhaps have influenced his two cousins by a good example. But he was ambitious and reckless. He purchased more land at Erddig, and in 1684 built the middle portion of the present mansion,⁵⁸ and in doing so completely "overbuilt himself" as

⁵⁶ He writes to Joshua Feb. 19, 1693; "Erthigg looks very empty without you . . . I should be glad of a little tobacco, Wrexham tobacco being very bad for ye rate."

⁵⁷ She had a marriage portion of £2,000. There was no issue.

⁵⁸ The cost was £677. The house was extended to 85 feet long and 50 feet deep, after the plan of Inigo Jones. The brickwork was done by Mr. Carter, of Chester.



By kind permission of Philip Yorke, Esq.]

Erthig (Erddig).
(The Garden Front.)

the saying is. His portrait is well drawn in the *Chronicles of Erthig* :—

“The man is revealed in every line of the innumerable documents he so carefully docketed and left behind. A jovial, easy-going country gentleman, addicted unfortunately to speculation, chiefly in mines, and to gambling in the then national sport of cock-fighting. His hand always in his pocket, but by no means only for himself. . . . He had a large circle of relatives and acquaintances, most of whom appear to have been constantly in debt and difficulty. He himself borrowed largely in every direction,⁵⁹ never paid interest on his mortgages or bonds, but preferred after a few years to renew the obligation for capital and interest, not unfrequently borrowing further sums from the same person.”⁶⁰

Year by year he plunged deeper into debt, and was compelled to live away from Erddig, which, as already stated, gave shelter to his two worthless cousins and other dependants, and for ten years the house was in the hands of Receivers. At last the crash came, and the house and land were sold to Mr. John Mellor, a Master in Chancery, in 1715, for £17,000, that being the highest offer.⁶¹

In 1716 Joshua was living at “The Blew Spires,” Old Bailey, but the date of his death and place of burial are unknown.

Well would it have been if he had not involved others in the ruin that he brought upon himself, but, unfortunately, his younger brother John was dragged into the financial whirlpool and also suffered destruction.

⁵⁹ Amongst his creditors was Elihu Yale, founder of Yale University, who had advanced £2,000.

⁶⁰ *Chronicles of Erthig*, p. 36.

⁶¹ From him the present owner, Philip Yorke, Esq., is directly descended.

With the exception of his grandfather, the Surveyor, John was the most celebrated member of the family. He was born 1646. Matriculated at Brasenose College 9 Nov. 1661, aged 15, "son of John E. of Pentreclawdd, co. Denbigh, arm.;" B.A. 1665; M.A. 1668; B.C.L. and D.C.L. 1672; a Student of Gray's Inn 1664; Advocate of Doctors' Commons 1672; a Master in Chancery 1684-1709; M.P. for Oxford University 1678-9; Chancellor to the Bishop of Exeter.

Antony à Wood says:—

"Joh. Edisbury of Brasenose Coll. . . . was chose a Burgess for the University of Oxon to serve in that Parliament which began at Westminster 6 Mar. 1678, and was afterwards one of the Masters in Chancery. He became Chancellor to the Bishop of Exeter on the death of Dr. Edw. Master in Oct. 1692."⁶²

There is an interesting letter of his amongst the Erddig MSS.⁶³ addressed to his elder brother Joshua, and announcing the death of Charles II. It begins thus:—

"Dear Brother,

Upon Friday, a quarter before 12 the King resigned his soul to Almighty God. A little before he dyed the room was cleared, only the Duke, the E. of Bath and another Lord. What was said I cannot hear, only the King gave him (the Duke) his breeches, and told him there were papers that concerned him in his pocket, and gave him the key of the Closet. Some while before he mentioned his 2 sons that were unprovided for. I cannot hear that he mentioned the D. of Monmouth in all his sickness to the Duke or any that waited on him. . . .

I am your truly loving brother,

JOHN EDISBURY.

Feb. 7 [1685]."

⁶² *Fasti. Oxon.*, Vol. II., p. 189, 1771 Ed.

⁶³ Published in *Border Counties Byegones*, N.S., Vol. IX., p. 22.; also in *Chronicles of Erthig*, p. 47.

In his position as Master in Chancery he embezzled a large sum of money and lent it to Joshua. Whether the latter knew whence the money came cannot be decided, but one who has studied all the documents in the case says: "I, too, should think Joshua Edisbury must have been a rogue, since the records show that the two brothers tried to do one another and the various money-lenders with whom they had dealings."⁶⁴

John Edisbury's petition to the Lord Chancellor for mercy is sad reading. He says:—

"Yo^r Petitioner with ye Utmost Shame and Sorrow, doth acknowledge his Crimes & abhor himself for his Breach of Trust, in Misapplying ye Money committed to his Charge by y^e Order of this Court, (so that he is unable at present to pay ye same.)

But forasmuch as yo^r Peticon^r was seduced into that guilt by affection towards his Brother, Whose Estate yo^r Peticner then verily believed to be more than sufficient to reimburse y^e money lent, & all other Incumbrances whatsoever.

And for that y^r Peticner hath already given all y^e Satisfaction of w^{ch} he is at present capable, by delivering up & making over in truste for y^e Suitors of ye Court, all Bondes & Securities for Moneys w^{ch} he any way had, & leaving himself nothing to depend on besides Charitie of Friends."

Therefore the Petitioner goes on to ask for his discharge from office, etc.—*Chronicles of Erthig*, p. 141.

He died May 16, 1713, leaving, according to one writer, "sufficient money to found the Prerogative Court at Canterbury." But this is quite impossible. The family tradition is that he died of a broken heart,

⁶⁴ *Chronicles of Erthig*, p. 138. But Mr. Palmer says (p. 231 *op. cit.*):—"The conviction is forced on me by reading a great deal of his correspondence that Joshua did not mean to be dishonest. He was amiable, well-disposed, and certainly much beloved."—[I am sorry I cannot agree with Mr. Palmer.]

penniless, intestate, and without issue; and as Joshua also had no issue, the direct line of the Edisburys came to an end.

Their heirs-at-law were Mrs. Martha Lloyd (sister to John and Joshua) and their nephew, Edward Owen.

Mr. Palmer says:—⁶⁵

“The blood of John Edisbury, of Erddig, was continued, firstly, through his daughter Martha to the Phillipses, of Gwernhaulod, and then to the Fletchers, of Gwernhaulod and Nerquis Hall, both in the County of Flint; and secondly, through his daughter Mary to the Kynastons, of Bryngwyn, Montgomeryshire, and then to the Owens and Mostyn Owens, of Woodhouse, Salop.”

Lloyd's *History of Powys Fadog*, errs in saying that James Edisbury, of Bersham, who died in 1792, was the eldest son of Joshua Edisbury, of Erddig. There was, as I have said, no direct heir, but from these Edisburys of Bersham Hall (which was not built or owned by the Edisburys of Erddig) Mr. J. F. Edisbury, J.P., of Wrexham, the present representative of the family is descended. “There can be no doubt that the two families were branches of one stock, and related laterally in some way which I have not been able to trace,” says Mr. Palmer, and I agree with him.

As Mr. Palmer gives the Edisbury pedigree, I have not thought it necessary to print it here. It requires a little revision and some additions, which can be made from this article and from the *Chronicles of Erthig*.

⁶⁵ In his book and in the *Chronicles of Erthig* will be found many items that I have had to omit, but I think I have left out nothing of importance.